

China's Minorities

Integration and Modernization
in the Twentieth Century

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Politics and the non-Han Peoples, 1900-1949

THE first half of the twentieth century was a period of great instability and change in Chinese history. It began with a giant upheaval in the form of the siege of the legations in the capital, Beijing, which was forcibly lifted by the troops of eight foreign powers. The upheaval forced the declining Manchu Qing dynasty to undertake major reforms, which temporarily strengthened, but did not save it. At the end of 1911, the followers of the republican Sun Yatsen succeeded in overthrowing the dynasty and, at the beginning of the next year, in setting up the Republic of China, with Sun as Provisional President. Although none of the various attempts at re-establishing the empire was more than temporarily successful, the hopes engendered by Republican rule proved illusory as warlords competed for power and influence. Sun Yatsen's term as Provisional President lasted only about six weeks, the real powerholder in the first years of the Republic being Yuan Shikai. In 1921, Sun Yatsen became head of a government again, this time based in Guangzhou. The primary aim of the Guangzhou government and its leaders was to reunite the country, but Sun Yatsen died in March 1925 without coming anywhere near accomplishing that goal. Sun's principal political organ, the Nationalist Party (Guomindang), had been founded in 1912, but did not hold its first National Congress until January 1924 in Guangzhou.

From 1926 to 1928, Chiang Kaishek led the Northern Expedition from Guangzhou and succeeded in a theoretical reunification of the country. He carried out a *coup d'état* in 1927, suppressing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the trade unions. However, Chiang Kaishek's government came up against numerous very serious problems, among which three stand out as pre-eminent. The first was Japanese encroachments on and then full-scale invasion of China, resulting in the War of Resistance against Japan from 1937 to 1945. The second was the continuing power of the warlords, against whom Chiang Kaishek fought with only limited success. Many of China's provinces and territories were ruled by semi-independent warlords, and the central government held

effective control over only a small proportion of China's total area. The third was the CCP, which revived rather quickly after Chiang's 1927 onslaught. In November 1931, Mao Zedong set up an independent—indeed rival—regime, the Chinese Soviet Republic, with its capital in Ruijin, Jiangxi province. Although Chiang succeeded in overthrowing the Chinese Soviet Republic by military force, the CCP undertook the Long March, moving its headquarters from Ruijin in the south-west of China to Yan'an, Shaanxi province, in the north-west. The Chinese won the War of Resistance against Japan, but it left Chiang Kaishek's government exhausted and totally unable to combat the extremely serious economic and social problems which China faced. In 1946, civil war broke out between Chiang's forces and the CCP, whose forces had strengthened during the War of Resistance, and in 1949 Chiang was forced to flee to Taiwan with his main followers.¹

The Last Decade of the Qing Dynasty

The reforms by the central Qing government following the Boxer uprising had different impacts on the main minority regions. In the Tibetan areas, the last few years of the Manchu dynasty saw extensive, and temporarily successful, attempts to assert Chinese control. In 1903 and 1904, Tibet suffered foreign invasion and humiliation from the British Younghusband Mission, discussed in Chapter 4. In 1906, the court sent to Lhasa, as Deputy Resident, the energetic Han official Zhang Yintang, who quickly had the incompetent Manchu Resident Yutai impeached for corruption. More importantly, Zhang set up nine bureaux to take control of various aspects of government, including foreign affairs, the police, military training, finance, trade and handicrafts, education, and agriculture. Through these bureaux he carried out many modernizing reforms, such as founding a Tibetan army and military academy and secularizing the Lhasa government. Even Sir Charles Bell, who was generally very anti-Chinese where Tibet was concerned, conceded that the Chinese officials 'gave straighter justice' than the Tibetan magistrates in non-political cases. Chinese magistrates were much less prone to take bribes than their Tibetan counterparts.² At the same time, Zhang Yintang's attitude towards Tibetan culture was frankly chauvinistic and assimilative. He despised Tibetan language, customs, and culture and wanted to

replace them with those of the Han. The Chinese behaved very much as overlords and were generally disliked by the Tibetan population. Zhang Yintang's administration and his reforms did not last long. He himself fell victim to the suspicions and jealousies of the newly appointed Resident Lianyu, and was removed from office.

In the eastern Tibetan areas, Zhao Erfeng carried out reforms with similar energy. Having suppressed popular Tibetan uprisings in Litang and Batang in western Sichuan, he was given unlimited powers by the court to strengthen central control in the Sichuan and Yunnan borderlands. He changed the post of hereditary local headman to an appointed one. He secularized the government and established mining, agricultural, and other enterprises. He restricted the numbers of lamas in the monasteries and imposed taxation on monastic land and other landed estates. Zhao Erfeng's policies had the effect of undermining the authority and power of the local Tibetan lamas and lay power-holders and, thus, aroused their extreme ire. Like Zhang Yintang, he despised the Tibetans, their language, and their culture; he tried to enforce the use of the Chinese language and to replace Tibetan wedding and funeral customs, which he regarded as 'barbaric', with equivalents based on Confucianism. Because of his tendency to execute those who infringed or resisted his policies, he had the reputation for ruthlessness, but also for applying rules and punishments equitably among all sectors of the population.³

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama had fled Lhasa at the time of the Younghusband occupation in 1904 and lived for several years in Qinghai, Mongolia, and Beijing, among other places. The Chinese court made it crystal clear to him that when he returned to Lhasa it would be as the subject and subordinate of the Chinese government. His return to the Tibetan capital was at the end of 1909.

Meanwhile, the court commanded that Zhao Erfeng's reforms in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan should be followed up by the despatch of a military force to Lhasa itself, with the aim of further strengthening central control over Tibet. The 2,000 troops easily overcame the limited resistance they encountered and occupied the Tibetan capital in February 1910. The Dalai Lama, who had been there for less than two months, immediately fled again, this time towards Darjeeling, in the far north of Bengal, India. The Chinese court promptly ordered that he be deposed on the

grounds of various evil traits and actions, including treachery and attempted rebellion.⁴

With the Dalai Lama's flight, the representatives of the Chinese government in effect took over the government of Tibet. Consequently, the impact of the Younghusband Mission, several years on, 'was to lay Tibet open to a reassertion of Chinese authority'.⁵ The power of the Qing dynasty in Tibet was at its greatest just at the time when Manchu rule was itself on the point of collapse.

In Mongolia, the situation was somewhat different. The political and social unrest which had characterized Mongolia in the nineteenth century grew more serious in the last decade of Qing rule. In 1900, a mutiny broke out in the army over poor conditions and lack of pay, and local people joined in to plunder Chinese shops and vegetable gardens. Although the mutiny accomplished nothing, it did demonstrate the demoralization of the regime in Mongolia. In 1900, a group of several hundred people, led by a lama and including some armed Russians, smashed up over forty Chinese shops. The ringleader was strangled and about 360 lamas were among those punished. In 1910, the new Manchu resident Sanduo was stoned during a riot in the Mongolian capital Urga by lamas and ordinary people against the Chinese, according to one authority, because his forward policy made him especially hated.⁶

The Mongolian nobility had for some time been increasingly unhappy with Manchu rule and, in July 1911, a group of clerical and lay nobles suggested to the Khutuktu, the supreme theocratic ruler and symbol of Mongolian identity, that the Russians be asked for help against the Chinese in favour of Mongolian independence. Shortly afterwards, a provisional government was established. On 1 December the same year, Mongolia formally declared independence, while on the same day the Khutuktu formally wrote to the office of the Manchu Resident Sanduo, issuing him and other Qing dynasty officials an ultimatum to leave the country immediately.⁷ Of course, Sanduo protested, but the Qing dynasty was itself on the point of collapse and he yielded to the inevitable on 4 December. On 28 December 1911, just four days before the formal proclamation of the Republic of China, the Khutuktu held a ceremony declaring himself head of government over a monarchical Mongol Empire.⁸

In contrast to Mongolia and Tibet, Xinjiang had become a regular province. In the last decade of Qing rule, the government

there attempted some military and political reforms, following the patterns being encouraged in the rest of the country in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion. For example, it established several new military training schools in an endeavour to introduce modern military science. One at Yili had a Japanese instructor to instil modern military discipline into the troops. Xinjiang took part in the campaign to reduce opium addiction by prohibiting its growth and restricting its sale, but met with very limited success. The government also tried to introduce judicial reforms, but its failure in this area was even more total than in opium suppression.

Just after the outbreak of the 1911 revolution, an uprising led by disaffected Han officers took place in Ürümqi against the Xinjiang government, but it was very quickly put down. At the end of the year another uprising broke out, this time in Yili. It was considerably more successful. The Xinjiang Governor Yuan Dahua refused to serve the Republic; instead he handed over his authority to one of his senior officials, Yang Zengxin, and fled. Yang immediately declared allegiance to the Republic of China, and very soon afterwards the Republican President Yuan Shikai confirmed him as the first post-Qing Governor of Xinjiang.

Theory and Policy towards Minorities under the Republic of China

Throughout the Republican period from 1912 to 1949, the basic aim of policy towards the minorities was consistently to preserve China's national unity. The identity of the minorities was irrelevant, except insofar as it was opposed to Chinese unity, in which case it needed suppression. The newly installed Republican government did not take long to make its views known on minority matters. On 22 April 1912, Yuan Shikai issued a presidential decree, declaring that '[n]ow that the republic of five nationalities has been established, all areas of Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang are integral territory (*lingtu*) of our Republic of China, so that all the nationalities (*minzu*) of Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang are citizens of our Republic of China.'⁹

Compared with the Han, the minorities occupied considerably more of that area which the governments of the Republic of China regarded as legitimately part of their national territory. The 'borders' (*bianjiang*) was the technical term used to designate the

places which were home to the minorities. Generally speaking, the territories included in this designation were the north-eastern, or Manchurian, provinces, Inner and Outer Mongolia, Xinjiang, Xikang, and Tibet.¹⁰ Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi could also be included, but they were not necessarily considered minority nationality areas, because the non-Han peoples there were regarded, not as nationalities, but as 'tribes' or 'aborigines'. The reason for using the term 'borders' to describe the minority areas is clear enough, for there was, and remains, a strong tendency for the minorities to live near China's national boundaries. Yet there are obvious imperfections in equating the territories of the minorities with the borders, since there is no exact correlation between the distance from a border and a minority area. Moreover, the north-east was already predominantly a Han area by the time the Republic of China replaced the Manchu dynasty.

The Chinese government was convinced of its right to inherit the territories ruled by the Manchus, but Mongolian identity made the Mongols firm in their belief that the fall of the Manchus should leave them independent.¹¹ The Republic of China had no intention whatever of acknowledging the loss of Outer Mongolia, and the Republican governments fought against it. At first they had some success and, by the beginning of 1920, had gone a long way towards reasserting sovereignty over Outer Mongolia.¹² However, in 1921, the Mongolian revolution and Soviet occupation of Outer Mongolia resulted in the permanent independence of the country, and consequently, its loss to China. It was not initially obvious that the situation would be permanent, and China for many years refused to recognize the Mongolian government on the grounds that it persisted in regarding Outer Mongolia as Chinese territory (see Chapter 4).

Before the Revolution of 1911, the primary aim of Sun Yatsen's Alliance Society (*Tongmeng hui*) had been to topple the Manchu dynasty, and, therefore, the slogan 'drive out the Tartar slaves, and revive China' inevitably loomed large in their thinking. The chauvinism in the slogan reflected a strong tinge of racism in Sun's thought,¹³ exacerbated by the hostility the League's members felt towards the ruling Manchus. After the revolution succeeded and the Manchus were no longer the principal enemy, a new slogan was adopted which referred to China as 'the Republic of Five Nationalities'. However, the Alliance Society's policy, as expressed in its nine-point manifesto of 3 March 1912, was 'to implement

racial evolution'.¹⁴ That this implied assimilation was confirmed in August of the same year when the Alliance Society was re-organized as the Nationalist Party (Guomindang); it again issued a manifesto, one of the five points of which included a call for 'the strict implementation of racial assimilation (*zhongzu tonghua*)'.¹⁵

In terms of theory, Sun Yatsen deserves credit for being one of the few Chinese leaders of the first half of the twentieth century to develop a concept of 'nation'. This he did in a lecture on nationalism given on 27 January 1924 at the time of the Guomindang's First National Conference. Nationalism (*minzuzhuyi*) was the first of his Three Principles of the People, the other two being 'democracy' and 'people's livelihood'. Sun draws attention to the ambiguity of the term *minzu*, meaning both the 'nation', in the sense of the 'state', and 'nationality'. The two senses can best be distinguished, in Sun's view, through reference to forces. The nation-state depends upon force of arms, but the nationality depends on what he calls 'natural forces' (*ziran li*), of which he distinguishes five. The first and most important of these is blood relationships (*xuetong*), the blood of ancestors being transmitted down through the nationality. Clearly Sun Yatsen conceived the term *minzu* or 'nationality' to some extent in racial terms.¹⁶ Following this first 'natural force' he lists livelihood, spoken language, religion, and customs and habits, in that order. Sun acknowledged the existence of five nationalities in China, whom he calls the Han (*Han ren*), Mongols (*Menggu ren*), Manchus (*Manzhou ren*), Tibetans (*Xizang ren*) and Muslim Turks (*Huijiao zhi Tujue ren*),¹⁷ the last being the nationalities of Xinjiang, especially the Uygurs. The original flag of the Republic of China had five colours, which were representative of these five peoples.

Sun's main point is that, despite the existence of other nationalities, in fact the overwhelming majority of Chinese people are Han. From that he draws the conclusion that 'as far as the great majority are concerned, 400 million Chinese, we can say they are entirely Han; the same blood relationships, the same spoken and written language, the same religions, the same customs and habits, entirely one nationality'.¹⁸ He seems to be implying that the other four nationalities are simply not important at all. Despite being the most populous nationality in the world, the Chinese have no 'spirit of nationalism' and are but a loose sheet of sand. Sun argues that China faces the destruction of its nationality unless nationalism is earnestly promoted to weld the 400 million into a strong nation.

Sun Yatsen later developed his ideas on minorities in China, but without the general theory on what a nationality actually was. He said that, although they had a perfect right to exist within the Republic of China, they must be prepared to 'constitute a single powerful nation' together with the dominant Han. Moreover, the political nation as a whole would be better off if they were assimilated. This was because their presence in China militated against its unity as a nation-state. As he himself put it in a speech delivered in Guangzhou on 6 March 1921:

The name 'Republic of Five Nationalities' exists only because there exists a certain racial distinction which distorts the meaning of a single Republic. We must facilitate the dying out of all names of individual peoples inhabiting China, i.e. Manchus, Tibetans, etc. In this respect we must follow the example of the United States of America, i.e. satisfy the demands and requirements of all races and unite them in a single cultural and political whole.¹⁹

Although Sun at first speaks only of obliterating the *names* of the nationalities, he later specifies that they must be united into a single cultural and political whole. For Sun as a nationalist, it is the nation as a whole which is paramount, not the individual 'races' within it. However, it is very clear that, in fact, it is the majority Han who will be dictating the nature and shape of the single cultural and political whole into which all should unite. Like the Qing dynasty before him, he completely ignores the Miao, Bai, and other peoples of south-western China as nationalities distinct from the Han, but may already have regarded them as effectively assimilated, or as culturally and politically dead.

The Manifesto of the Guomindang's First National Congress was adopted on 23 January 1924—only four days before Sun's speech on nationalism cited earlier. By 1924, Sun had come under fairly strong Soviet influence and the Guomindang had formed a United Front with the CCP, making it possible even for CCP leaders to attend the Congress as members of the Guomindang. In general, the Manifesto reflects Sun Yatsen's views, yet, ironically, it puts forward a policy on the nationalities with a very different emphasis from the ideas enunciated in the speech of only four days later.

The Manifesto distinguishes two types of nationalism (*minzuzhuyi*): the requirement for liberation of the whole of China as a nation,

and the equality of the nationalities living within China's borders.²⁰ It states clearly that the Guomindang 'recognizes the right of self-determination (*zijue*) of all the nationalities within China. After the victory of the revolution against imperialism and the warlords, it will organize a free and united Republic of China formed by the free association of all the nationalities.'²¹

At the same time, Sun formulated a document entitled 'Fundamentals of National Reconstruction', which began with a brief discussion of the Three Principles of the People. Under nationalism, Sun wrote: 'The government should help and guide the weak and small nationalities (*minzu*) within its national boundaries toward self-determination (*zijue*) and autonomy (*zizhi*).'²²

The ideas of self-determination by free association included in the Manifesto and of self-determination and autonomy added in the 'Fundamentals of National Reconstruction' derive from the Soviet Union. Indeed, one writer notes the irony of the fact that 'the first disciples' of 'Lenin's adjuration' for self-determination for minorities came, not from the CCP, but the Guomindang.²³ The two principles suggest that the minorities would enjoy some rights in determining their own policies and future. The term 'free association' is somewhat unclear, but certainly did not extend to the right of secession. Sun Yatsen remained committed to the ideals of national unity and nationalism, even though the government he headed in 1924 actually controlled only a small part of China. However, any suggestion that assimilation may be desirable, which is implied in the speech of 27 January 1924 and had been stated fairly clearly in that of 6 March 1921, is contradicted both in the Manifesto and in the 'Fundamentals of National Reconstruction'.

The Guomindang's Manifesto exercised some influence in Inner Mongolia, which was then under warlord rule. There was a range of nationalist Mongol leaders, the most important one being the conservative Demchukdonggrub, known to the Chinese as Prince De,²⁴ whose group favoured self-determination for Inner Mongolia within the Republic of China. Another group, consisting of progressive youth and intellectuals, planned to form a leftist party, a strategy which gained Sun Yatsen's approval not long before he died in March 1925. In October the same year, the leftist Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party was formally set up through a Congress. The Party sent a message of congratulations to the Guomindang's Second Congress, held from 1-19 January 1926

in Guangzhou, in which it accepted Sun Yatsen's Three Principles of the People and called for the right of self-determination (*zijue quan*) for all nationalities and for the establishment of an autonomous government (*zizhi zhengfu*) in Inner Mongolia under a united Chinese National revolutionary government. In other words, what they were seeking was not total independence or secession from China, but autonomy within a larger nation.²⁵

The Second Guomindang Congress did not formally address the question of autonomy or self-determination. However, its Manifesto attacked imperialism in all its manifestations and implied the right of self-determination for all nationalities, which was so important to the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party. It also attacked narrow statism (*guojiazhu yi*), declaring this evil to be an imperialist trap, apparently because, in contrast to nationalism, it placed emphasis on the power of the state over individual nationalities. Equality was necessary: '[A]ll oppressed nationalities demand to be treated equally among each other, and at the same time demand that we treat others equally'.²⁶ So, while the Congress did not accept the Inner Mongolian plea, and even set itself apart from the minorities through its use of the term 'we', it did persist in the anti-assimilationist position of the First Congress. The leftist influence of Sun Yatsen's last days is clearly visible in the Second Congress. However, on 20 March 1926, only two months after the closure of the Congress on 19 January, Chiang Kaishek began his arrest of CCP members in the *Zhongshan* Incident and signalled a move strongly to the right. On 1 July the same year, he gave orders to begin his famous Northern Expedition to reunite China.

Very shortly after its accession to power in 1927, Chiang Kaishek's government changed the national flag to eliminate the five colours representing the five nationalities. Like this symbolic change, the policy on the minorities which emerged from the Third Congress of the Guomindang in March 1929 was a retreat from the ideals of the First and Second Congresses. Though the Third Congress was long on rhetoric, but short on substance, it was quite clearly more assimilationist in approach than the Second Congress. 'In history, geography, and the national economy,' it claimed, Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang province were 'part of the Chinese nation', rather than of the Republic of China. It called for 'consistent unity under the Three Principles of the People through mutual love among the nationalities within the borders of China', and for 'tight

unity among the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Hui, and Tibetan peoples on the basis of nationalism'. These circumstances and feelings would lead the nationalities 'to become a solid and powerful state-nationality (*guozu*)'.²⁷ On the other hand, the concepts of self-determination and of free association for the nationalities with China were notably absent. The Second Plenary Session of the Third Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang was overtly hostile to such notions. On 17 June 1929, it adopted a resolution on Mongolia and Tibet which dismissed these ideas as 'propaganda whipped up . . . by the Third International', in other words, by the Communists.²⁸

The enthusiasm for autonomy in Inner Mongolia which had led to the founding of the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party in 1925 persisted throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s. Shortly after the Northern Expedition succeeded, Chiang Kaishek even received a Mongol delegation requesting the establishment of an autonomous area for Inner Mongolia. However, towards the end of 1928 and early in 1929, his government had set up the three provinces of Jehol, Chahar, and Suiyuan in regions of Inner Mongolia. These provinces were anything but autonomous and appeared to be Chiang's response to the Inner Mongolian request. This was the context of the Third Congress's discarding of the concept of autonomy.

As well as the term *guozu*, the Third Congress document uses such expressions as *Zhonghua guozu* (the Chinese state-nationality) and *guozuzhu yi* (state-nationality-ism). Such terminology implies not only a stronger emphasis on the unity of the Chinese state than does the simple 'nationality' (*minzu*), but also a fusion of the subgroups into the one grand nation of China. One PRC Mongol historian regards the invitation 'to become a solid and powerful state-nationality' as 'obviously representing a hidden agenda by the Guomindang political power to implement a policy of assimilation of the nationalities'.²⁹

The suggestion that the direction of Guomindang policy was towards assimilation is substantiated by the opening chapter of Chiang Kaishek's famous book *China's Destiny*, which was first published in March 1943. Much of it is devoted to expounding the idea that all of China's five nationalities belong to the same racial stock and share a common ancestry. In the revised January 1944 edition, he added a paragraph in which he emphasized that 'the differentiation among China's five peoples is due to regional

and religious factors, and not to race or blood'.³⁰ Although he added that 'this fact must be thoroughly understood by all our fellow countrymen', it is in fact historically impossible to verify. Moreover, it implies that the Republican revolution against the Manchus was but a civil war, with no real nationalist content, a view which Chiang Kaishek himself rejects when he credits the revolution's overthrow of the Manchus with 'avenging the national humiliation'.³¹ Just as in the case of the earlier thinking of Sun Yatsen, the primary reason for Chiang's attitude towards the minorities was the absolute pre-eminence of national unity in his mind.

Like its predecessors, Chiang Kaishek's government confined its attention to four minority nationalities: Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans, and Hui. This approach not only lumped the Uygurs and other minorities of Xinjiang in with the Hui, but also totally ignored the Koreans, not to mention the numerous minorities of Yunnan and Guizhou. At any rate, quite clearly assimilationist policies prevailed in Guizhou in the mid-1940s, where the Provincial Governor Yang Sen stated his intention of eradicating all differences among the nationalities forcefully or, as he so elegantly put it, 'by cutting a tangled skein of jute with a sharp knife'. He declared that 'no nationality (*minzu*) may have different clothes, scripts, or spoken languages' and predicted that 'within a few years it will be impossible any longer to hear disparate languages in Guizhou, to see any strange costumes, or to find any differences among the ethnic groups'.³²

Most of the minorities of the southwest were encouraged to lose their national identity and many were quite prepared to do so. One good illustrative example from among the more populous minorities of Yunnan province was the Bai people, who became so nearly assimilated that they 'would be seriously offended' if their Chinese origin were questioned.³³ It is noteworthy that the people in the West Town which Francis Hsu made famous in his anthropological study *Under the Ancestor's Shadow*³⁴ were in fact Bai, not Han. However, although they continued to speak Bai as their background language, in most respects they were more like Han than Bai, even to the extent of binding women's feet, a practice which had never been prevalent among the Bai. One writer who lived among the Bai in Lijiang, Western Yunnan, throughout most of the 1940s claims that, among all the peoples of Yunnan, they were 'the closest to the Chinese having adopted the Celestial Civilization almost in its entirety'.³⁵

Over the period of the Republic, constitutional compacts had been adopted in 1912, 1914, 1923, and 1931 which enshrined the principle of equality for all nationalities before the law.³⁶ All had been honoured more in the breach than in the observance. On 25 December 1946, the National Assembly adopted a new democratic Constitution of the Chinese Republic. In January the same year, the Political Consultative Conference, consisting of representatives from the Guomindang, CCP, and other political parties, had adopted a provisional Constitution which was the fundamentally the same as the one eventually adopted in December. The Constitution retained the principle of equality for all, irrespective of sex or race. It stipulated that the National Assembly, described as 'the sovereign organ of the people', and the Legislative Yuan, which exercised legislative functions and sat when the National Assembly was not in session, will be elected mainly on the basis of territorial and professional representation, so that the various minority regions should take part in the elections and contribute a fair share of representation to the governing bodies.³⁷ It also ordained that the state should assist the education, culture, public health, and so on of the 'various nationalities in the border regions'.³⁸

The 1946 Constitution was definitely an advance on what had existed before in China, not only in general terms but in particular concerning the minority nationalities. There was some attempt at a coherent policy towards them. However, the 1946 Constitution was never properly implemented. By the time it was adopted, Chiang Kaishek was much more interested in the war against the CCP, and it is very doubtful that he was ever particularly interested in the promises it enshrined anyway. One Western writer has even suggested that 'the real authors of the Kuomintang's [Guomindang's] constitutional promises of 1946 were the Communists because they had, by virtue of their own attractive policies and actions, induced the Kuomintang to follow suit'.³⁹

Republican Policy Implementation

The establishment of the ROC brought about some changes in the administration of the 'border areas', but they were neither quick nor fundamental. The names of all the organizations which were established to replace the old Mongol Superintendency (*Lifan*

luan) of the Qing period all specified their responsibility as Mongolia and Tibet. With the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, the Mongol Superintendency was replaced by subministerial bodies in charge of Mongolia and Tibet until, in 1914, the government set up the Court of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs (*Mengzang yuan*). This was directly responsible to the President of the ROC and was very similar in function to the old Mongol Superintendency.

Early in 1928, preparations began to establish a body to take charge of Mongolian and Tibetan affairs in the Guomindang government. The Mongol Buyantai, who had been elected to the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang in October 1924,⁴⁰ wrote to Chiang Kaishek suggesting that a special yuan-level body be set up to take charge of Mongolian and Tibetan affairs. His arguments were that, 'due to historical reasons, Mongols of all classes had offered great confidence and obedience to the Court of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs',⁴¹ and, besides which, such a move would boost the importance of Mongols and Tibetans and help make them supportive of the government.

In February 1929, the new government set up the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (*Mengzang weiyuan hui*), which was one of the ministries, commissions, and administrations under the Executive Yuan. It was equivalent to a ministry in status and, thus, lower than the yuan level for which Buyantai had asked. Although the operation rules, size, and even structure of the Commission were revised many times during the period of the National government, its primary function was always to look after the administration of Mongolian and Tibetan affairs. There is an extremely important implication in the establishment of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission—namely, that the government of Chiang Kaishek regarded both Tibet and Mongolia as Chinese territory. However, these two are listed as 'special territories', as opposed to a range of provinces which included Xinjiang and several others controlling the Inner Mongolian region, such as Suiyuan and Chahar.⁴² In 1928, the Guomindang government set up Qinghai and Xikang provinces from areas inhabited by the minority nationalities. The southern part of Qinghai and all of Xikang were mainly Tibetan. In 1939, the government extended Xikang to take in parts of what had previously been Sichuan, including some Tibetan and Yi areas.

In social terms, practice was for the members of the minorities and the Han Chinese to keep out of each other's way as far as

they could. The authorities certainly made no attempt to change the traditional contempt which the Han had felt for the minorities. This contempt applied even more to those less culturally powerful peoples regarded as 'tribes' than to the four strongest and most noteworthy nationalities.

One writer from western Hunan was prepared to criticize the notion espoused by Sun Yatsen and others that only the traditional five nationalities existed in China, his argument being simply that the Miao were recognizably a different nationality from the Han. In his study of the Miao of western Hunan, he adopted a generally condescending, but certainly not hostile, attitude towards them. Despite his view that the Miao are a nationality in their own right, he called for 'assimilation' (*tonghua*) between them and the Han through intermarriage, but specifies that it must be Han men who marry Miao women, not the other way around.⁴³ Presumably this is because the male line determines the race of future generations, so that the Miao would simply die out and become Han. General Yang Zisen of Guizhou took a similar line toward the Miao of his own province, except that he also held the power to implement it. His policies on the Miao were 'education for assimilation' (*tonghua jiaoyu*), intermarriage with the Han to that end, and Han dress for the Miao.⁴⁴

One of the minorities which remained more or less totally isolated from the control of the government was the Yi, at that time known as the Lolo. Alan Winington, who visited the Norsu branch of the Yi in Ninglang, Yunnan province, late in the 1950s, claims that they traditionally violently hated anything Han.⁴⁵ The nobles had been able to run a slave society in which the owners regarded the slaves rather like animals, only a bit more intelligent, and had the right of life and death over them. The punishment for petty theft of salt was a beating to death in front of all the other slaves as a warning.⁴⁶ It is very doubtful that the government would have been able to do anything about this, even had it cared enough to try, because it lacked real control over the area. It regarded the Lolo as primitive people beyond the pale of civilization.

The example illustrates that, for all their emphasis on national unity, the governments of the Republic period were not actually able to impose their rule throughout the territory they regarded as China. In practice, very wide differences emerged among the experiences of the regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. In the following subsections, discussion is limited to Xinjiang and some

Tibetan areas as examples of territories inhabited by peoples recognized as nationalities by Republican governments.

Xinjiang

In Xinjiang the outbreak of the Revolution of 1911 actually made very little difference to the political order. Governor Yang Zengxin had been a very senior member of the Qing bureaucracy and he did little to change his methods of administration. To be fair to him, however, Xinjiang was relatively free of civil war and rebellion under his rule. From the point of view of the central governments, it is even more important to note that the secessionist activities which had successfully detached Outer Mongolia from China were very quiet and ineffective in Xinjiang. Yet, Yang Zengxin's conservatism was merely holding down economic and intellectual pressures which were bound to burst forth eventually.

Owen Lattimore has described both Yang Zengxin and his immediate successor, Jin Shuren, as 'the last of the old imperial bureaucrats' in the system of government which had existed more or less unchanged since 1884.⁴⁷ However, Jin Shuren was more corrupt and less capable than Yang. Moreover, his policy towards the Muslim peoples of Xinjiang was harsher. Whereas Yang Zengxin had accentuated the differences among nationalities and been prepared to tolerate and even encourage Muslim practices as long as there was no hint of outside influences, Jin introduced a tax on the butchering of all animals in Xinjiang and forbade Muslims to make the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁴⁸ Muslims quickly came to resent his rule furiously. Jin Shuren's attacks on the Muslims, who constituted the overwhelming majority of his subjects, culminated in the annexation of the hitherto autonomous Muslim Khanate of Kumul (Hami in Chinese). The people reacted with a major rebellion in 1931, the first in a series long-lasting and savage enough to lead one authority to allocate to Xinjiang the 'somewhat dubious distinction' of being China's 'most rebellious territory', not only in the nineteenth century, but also in the first half of the twentieth.⁴⁹ A Hui army from Gansu, led by Ma Zhongying, came to the assistance of the Kumul rebellion. The Khanate itself was systematically destroyed with enormous bloodshed and the massacre of ordinary Uygur villagers. One Han official who arrived in Xinjiang just after the revolt claims it cost at least 100,000 lives and incalculable losses in terms of trade and human misery.⁵⁰

Yet the rebellion itself can hardly be said to have been defeated. It led on to a much more serious challenge to the Xinjiang government, namely a secessionist rebellion based in southern Xinjiang. Late in 1933, the leaders of this rebellion proclaimed the Turkish-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan, with its capital in Kaxgar and a constitution which declared that the state looked to the government in Nanjing and to the League of Nations 'for the guarantee of its independence'.⁵¹ For all its dangers to the Xinjiang government, the Kumul rebellion had been localized in the sense that it never aimed at secession. Meanwhile, Jin Shuren was overthrown by a *coup d'état* in April 1933 and replaced by a Han Chinese from Manchuria called Sheng Shicai. Ma Zhongying returned to Xinjiang and was active in stirring Muslim rebellion against Sheng Shicai in Jungaria in the north of the province. However, ironically, he also fought actively and effectively against the Eastern Turkestan Republic. It was his troops, not those of Sheng Shicai, which recaptured Kaxgar for the central government in February 1934. As one writer aptly notes, this development 'emphasised the deeply conflicting interests of Turkic-speaking and Chinese-speaking Muslims' in southern Xinjiang.⁵²

Sheng Shicai came to power with military assistance from the Soviet Union, and his relations with that country are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. His overall policies, and those towards minority nationalities in particular, were markedly more progressive than either those of his predecessors in Xinjiang or those of the Chiang Kaishek government of his own day. One of his 'six great principles' (see Chapter 4) was national equality, including cultural diversity or cultural autonomy. Under this policy, Uygurs and Kazaks were appointed to high positions in their own regions. It was also Sheng Shicai who, after a break of many centuries, reintroduced the name 'Uygurs' into Xinjiang to apply to the settled Turks of the region.⁵³ This certainly suggests that he was prepared to allow a certain degree of national identity among the minorities of Xinjiang, provided there was no question of secession.

Some accounts give a reasonably positive picture of Sheng's rule to 1942. One prominent Western observer in that group is Owen Lattimore, who claims that Sheng Shicai 'embarked on a period of real reform' from 1933 on, including 'racial or national equality, clean government, peace, and reconstruction'.⁵⁴ Others are much less complimentary. Andrew Forbes, while admitting that no

sources are truly non-partisan, claims to draw from a painstaking examination of those available to him 'a picture of police terror, military repression, and continuing Muslim resistance to Sheng's rule'.⁵⁵ These two accounts are not necessarily contradictory, since it is quite common for repressive regimes to undertake reform and aim to eliminate corruption. Moreover, given the recent and more distant history of Xinjiang's Islamic nationalities at the hands of Han leaders and their religious conservatism, an avowed leftist like Sheng Shicai could hardly expect support from them, no matter what his policy towards them.

In November 1944, Turkic Muslims and White Russians in Yili rebelled against the Chinese government and established the East Turkestan Republic, with their capital in Gulja (Yining), the main city of Yili. The rebels aimed to control the whole of East Turkestan, the region the Chinese knew as the province of Xinjiang, and to form there a state totally independent of China. A major force driving them was the oppression to which they had been subjected by the Han, including Sheng Shicai. The Muslim forces advanced to the east, expelling the Chinese troops quite easily. The territory which the East Turkestan Republic actually controlled consisted of three districts in the far north-west of Xinjiang, equivalent to most of the area of Jungaria, the home of the Kazaks.

For the central government, which was still at war with the Japanese, 1944 could hardly have been a worse time for yet another secessionist rebellion. Unable to defeat the East Turkestan Republic militarily, Chiang Kaishek sent General Zhang Zhizhong to Xinjiang and made a personal appeal to the Muslim leaders for negotiations. On 2 January 1946, Zhang Zhizhong reached a peace agreement with the 'three disturbed districts', promising self-government. The people of Xinjiang would have the right to elect government officials and one of the provincial vice-chairmen would come from the 'three districts'. In addition, the agreement guaranteed that the government would 'punish discrimination on the basis of religion' and that primary and secondary schools would use the language of the local nationality, although Chinese would be a required course in the secondary schools. The cultures and arts of the nationalities would expand freely, and there would be freedom of publication, assembly, and speech.⁵⁶ Zhang Zhizhong became Chairman of Xinjiang.

The agreement was extremely liberal, but in fact it was never properly implemented. The central government continued to push

to extend its control in Xinjiang, while the Chinese military interfered continually in the region's civil affairs. They aimed to prevent the reforms required by the agreement. Naturally enough, local Han bureaucrats were fearful for their own power if autonomy took root, and they were quite happy to co-operate with the military. A coalition government led by Zhang Zhizhong was supposed to have a 70:30 ratio of minority nationalities to Han Chinese, but it was never put into effect. Chinese-appointed bureaucrats remained firmly in control of Xinjiang, as they were in other provinces in China. In May 1947, Zhang Zhizhong was removed from office and any modest attempts at reform collapsed.

The history of this period further worsened the already very bad relations between the Turkic nationalities of Xinjiang and the Han. The government put out a great deal of rhetoric about the 'unity of the nationalities' (*minzu tuanjie*). However, a major study of the East Turkestan Republic has shown that 'Chinese policy and implementation were in fact divisive, ultimately driving Han and Moslem farther apart and exacerbating existing tensions in the region'.⁵⁷

Tibetan Areas

Developments in Xinjiang were thus characterized by sporadic, but determined, efforts by the Uygurs and others to become independent, with the Han and even the Hui prepared for extensive bloodshed to prevent such an occurrence. In the Tibetan areas, the situation could hardly have been more different. Han rule there was very weak and inconsistent, while the local Tibetan regime in general conducted its own affairs irrespective of the Chinese government.

With the collapse of the Qing dynasty, serious fighting had broken out in parts of Tibet, causing the new ROC President Yuan Shikai to send troops in July 1912 in an attempt to quell the disorder. The fledgling Republic had so many problems on its hands that it could not possibly succeed in this venture, and by April 1913 all Han had withdrawn from Tibet. In the meantime, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had returned to Tibet in June 1912 and was taking steps to detach Tibet from China to make it an independent state. In January 1913, his regime concluded an alliance with Mongolia by which each recognized the other's independence,

but no government, let alone the Chinese, was prepared to recognize the agreement (see Chapter 4). In the meantime, the Dalai Lama, determined to remove Chinese influence from Tibet, declared independence in Lhasa on 13 February 1913. 'We are a small, religious, and independent nation', he stated, with the obligation to 'defend our country'. Although he maintained that 'the Chinese intention of colonizing Tibet under the patron-priest relationship' had 'faded like a rainbow in the sky', China was obviously the main country against which this defence was necessary.⁵⁸

It was not until 1919 that the Chinese government re-established any formal links with Tibet. In that year, it wired the Governor of Gansu province Zhang Guangjian to send a mission to Lhasa from Gansu province. The mission held talks with the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, and representatives of the main monasteries in and outside Lhasa, reminding them of the Chinese government's view that Tibet was part of China and warning them against foreign separatist activities, presumably referring mainly to those of the British. It arrived back in Gansu in April 1920 bearing gifts and correspondence from the two main Tibetan lamas, including a letter from the Dalai Lama to Zhang Guangjian in which he said: 'I hope from now on you will always attend to all affairs within Tibet'.⁵⁹

Sir Charles Bell, who visited Tibet from late 1920 to 1921, acknowledged that there was a pro-Chinese faction in Tibet 'among the officials, the priests, and the people'. According to him, the Chinese Mission, which had been in Lhasa not long before his own, had been able to build on the natural affinity and long-standing connection between the two peoples. Moreover, during the days when China had exercised control early in the century, the peasants had received better treatment from Chinese officials than was currently the case from their own. The Chinese government did what it could to attract the main Lhasa monasteries to their side by giving them subsidies. However, Bell was convinced that the Dalai Lama himself was not enthusiastic about the pro-Chinese faction and pointed out the much better treatment which Bell had himself received than the members of the Chinese Mission.⁶⁰

Although the Dalai Lama's expression of loyalty to the Governor of Gansu was not exactly a declaration that Tibet was part of China, Bell himself was prepared to concede that 'Chinese influence in Lhasa was considerably augmented' through the Mission.⁶¹ It appears that the Dalai Lama's mood was veering much more in

China's direction at the time of the Mission than it had been just a few years before. Moreover, it continued to change in the same direction in later years. For some years, the Dalai Lama had been embroiled in a fierce political and financial battle with the Panchen Lama, which resulted in the latter fleeing Tibet at the end of 1923 and coming to an arrangement with the Chinese government. The agreement enabled China to increase its own influence among the Tibetans by playing off the two main lamas against one another. The Panchen Lama died in December 1937, without having achieved his aim of returning to Tibet.

A few years earlier, when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama died at the end of 1934, the Chinese government sent a delegation led by General Huang Musong with the aim of strengthening relations between Nanjing and Lhasa, for example by setting up a radio service with which contacts could be maintained. According to Huang's report made to the National Government, he made the Tibetan authorities a proposal which set down two fundamental points: that 'Tibet must be an integral part of the territory of China' and that 'Tibet must obey the Central Government'. It also granted Tibet autonomy, but with the central government appointing a high commissioner to be stationed in Tibet with duties which included guiding the regional autonomy. According to Huang Musong, the Tibetan authorities issued a counterproposal which accepted the first of the fundamental principles as far as external affairs were concerned, but balked at the compulsion to obey the central government lest such subjection be harmful to Tibet either religiously or politically. The counter-proposal also asked that the Chinese government promise not to reorganize Tibet into a province.⁶²

Hugh E. Richardson, who was the last British Trade Agent in Lhasa before his departure in 1950, gives a somewhat different account. Drawing on Tibetan sources obtained in the early 1940s, he states that the Tibetans never acknowledged that Tibet was an integral part of China. He claims that, while they wanted friendship with China, they were prepared only to concede Chinese suzerainty over Tibet under the conditions laid down in the 1914 Simla Convention,⁶³ a document which the Chinese government had never signed or ratified. Clearly, being 'an integral part of China' gives the Chinese government considerably more power than mere suzerainty. Under the Simla Convention, discussed in some detail in Chapter 4, China would have to respect Tibet's

territorial integrity, and abstain from 'interference' in its administration and from sending troops there. The Convention also gave Britain considerable rights in Tibet, so that the particular 'Tibetan sources' on which Richardson relied may easily have had a pro-British and, hence, anti-Chinese slant. Moreover, the early 1940s were precisely the years when the Tibetan local government again signalled its claim to independence from China, under circumstances discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, it is quite possible that the Tibetans were looking at their own history in order to find a specific message there. Yet, there is no doubt that the most powerful factions among the Lhasa authorities differed sharply from the Chinese government over the precise status of Tibet and its relationship with China.

The last major Chinese delegation to Tibet during the Guomindang period was sent in response to a cabled request from Lhasa for the Chinese government to be involved in the selection of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Chiang Kaishek immediately acceded and despatched to Lhasa a group headed by Wu Zhongxin, Chairman of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission. As it turned out, the choice had already fallen on Bstan-'dzin rgya-mtsho, but Wu remained in Lhasa to take a prominent role at the installation of the five-year-old boy in February 1940 and sat 'side by side by the new Dalai facing south, meeting Tibetan officials'.⁶⁴

There had been no dalai lama since the death of the Thirteenth in 1933, so a regent took power in Lhasa. Because the Fourteenth was still a small child, his enthronement was not a reason for the regent to yield power. Indeed, in 1941 a second and older regent took office, and the two became serious rivals. In April 1947, an attempt by the previous regent to return to power brought about what Heinrich Harrer calls a 'minor civil war' in Lhasa,⁶⁵ in which several hundred monks were killed and others flogged. The previous regent himself was imprisoned in the Potala Palace and died there in May; according to Richardson, 'there can be little doubt that he was murdered'.⁶⁶

Meanwhile political argument raged not only among the Tibetan lamas themselves, but also between the Tibetan and Chinese governments over the choice of a new Panchen Lama. The Chinese prevailed and in August 1949 they had Chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan, still a small boy at the time, installed as the Tenth Panchen Lama. The ceremony did not take place in Tibet itself, but at the famous Sku-'bum Monastery near Xining, the capital of Qinghai province.

It was perhaps the last major action of the Guomindang government relating to Tibet, since both Xining and the new Panchen Lama fell into the hands of the Communists early the following month. The Republican governments, having succeeded in allying themselves with the previous Panchen Lama at the expense of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, would now leave the CCP government with a supporter against the Fourteenth.

In a context of rather tenuous control by the Guomindang government, the various semi-independent warlords continued to exercise sway over their own provinces or regions. Remote regions, including many where the minorities lived, may in theory have been part of China, but in practice were ruled by people who were a law unto themselves.

One such area was Muli, in Xikang province near the border with Yunnan and which an American visitor in the 1920s and 1930s described as a kingdom ruled by a monarch with absolute 'spiritual and temporal sway over 22,000 subjects'⁶⁷ of Tibetan, Naxi, and other nationalities. On all sides of this kingdom were 'lawless bandits', who also belonged to the minorities. To the south and south-east was the 'Lolo robber tribe', which inhabited the area known under the PRC as the Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture. To the west were other even more lawless areas, which frequently made war against his kingdom.⁶⁸ According to the king, the regions west of his kingdom had formerly been controlled effectively as part of a Tibetan principedom centred on Litang. The ambitious Zhao Erfeng, discussed earlier in this chapter, had come 'with his imperialistic designs' and overturned the Litang princes, replacing them with Chinese magistrates. The result was anarchy and banditry. The Tibetans seized the arms of the newly arrived Chinese troops and used them to fight each other and the Chinese troops and magistrates. The tribal lands to the west became as independent as the kingdom itself. A 'bandit chief' set up court at a big monastery. He and other bandit chiefs 'loot and rob and murder. They even go on journeys of many weeks to hold up caravans or loot peaceful settlements. No Chinese dares to enter' the territories for fear of being murdered. Trade and contacts with China or anywhere else in the outside world ceased almost entirely.⁶⁹

Apart from the de facto independence of these remote minority regions, several points flow from this material. For one, Tibetans of Xikang blamed the Han Chinese for the problems of their

region and believed encroachments on their territory were 'imperialistic'. The Chinese government thought it proper to send troops and magistrates to territory it considered within China, but the local people did not necessarily share this view. Moreover, there was virtually no law or order. The Tibetan chiefs may have been both religious and temporal rulers, but in many cases were quite happy to behave like bandits, robbing and killing people of their own or other nationalities. According to the definitions suggested in the Introduction, these regions appear to have been totally traditional and unmodern in character, with persistent and very strong parochial political structures.

The CCP and the Minorities

Like the Guomindang, the CCP was interested in nationality problems from early times. Even before the party's birth, Mao Zedong affirmed the existence of China's nationalities and raised the issue of the great unity of the Chinese nation in 1919 in the short-lived periodical *Xiangjiang pinglun* (*The Xiang River Review*), which he himself edited. In 1922, the Manifesto of the Second CCP Congress formally put forward a slogan proclaiming 'the equality of the nationalities' and several other policies on nationalities.⁷⁰ On the other hand, during the first decade of the CCP's existence, the idea of self-determination for minorities was notably absent from its policies.⁷¹

This situation changed dramatically with the establishment of the Chinese Soviet Republic on 7 November 1931. Its Constitution, promulgated the same day, included the following statement in Article 14: 'All Mongols, Hui, Tibetans, Miao, Li, Koreans (*Gaoli ren*) and others living within the territory of China enjoy the full right of self-determination, that is, they may either secede from the Union of Chinese Soviets or set up their own autonomous region'.⁷² The explicit right of secession may have been designed to satisfy the most nationalistic of the minorities and allay fears of assimilation, as June Dreyer observes.⁷³ However, it was certainly not a policy which the CCP was prepared to maintain for long, and it was changed at the end of 1935 under circumstances discussed in Chapter 4. Another very significant aspect of this 1931 statement was that it included not only all but one of the traditional major minority nationalities, but also several others.

Unlike the Guomindang, the CCP was even prepared at this stage to take some notice of the Miao, Koreans, and even Li as nationalities.

In mid-October 1934, the Chinese Soviet Republic was defeated by Guomindang forces and the CCP remnants embarked on their Long March. By the end of the following year, this extraordinary achievement had brought the main force of the CCP right from Jiangxi in the south-east of China to northern Shaanxi not far from Inner Mongolia. From the end of 1936 until March 1947, the main CCP headquarters were in Yan'an in northern Shaanxi. At the end of the Long March, Mao Zedong did not claim it as a defeat resulting from the overthrow of his state within the Chinese state, but as a victory because it was 'a propaganda force, a seeding-machine'. After all, the Long March had 'announced to some 200 million people in eleven provinces that the road of the Red Army is their only road to liberation'; it had 'sown many seeds' which would 'yield a harvest in the future'.⁷⁴

The eleven provinces included several areas inhabited by minority nationalities. The Red Army's policy not to steal and always to respect the customs of minorities helped them gain recruits and good will in most of the nationality areas through which they passed. Their practice of freeing the inmates from Guomindang prisons was appreciated by those minorities who benefited from it. By the end of the Long March the CCP had won substantial numbers of minorities to its side. The American journalist Edgar Snow reported Mongol, Muslim, Tibetan, Miao, and Yi students working in Yan'an as well as the existence of Red Muslim training regiments.⁷⁵

In the Yi area of Xikang, the Red Army fought and defeated an Yi group which was planning to capture them and seize all their goods. However, this was followed by negotiations with an Yi leader, as a result of which Commander Liu Bocheng of the Red Army swore blood brotherhood with him. The Yi had come to hate the Guomindang troops because of their kill-and-burn tactics and were quite happy to assist the Red Army. Hundreds enlisted and some even reached northern Shaanxi with the Red Army.⁷⁶ However, there was a disadvantage for the CCP. The Yi were reputed to be a warlike people and factional war was common among them. Because of Liu Bocheng's alliance with the Yi leader, the Red Army was constantly attacked by a rival Yi group.⁷⁷

In September 1935, as they entered a Hui area in Gansu, the

Central Red Army's leadership issued the 'Regulations on the Hui Regions'. These included bans on unauthorized entry into a mosque and on killing a pig or eating pork in the home of a Hui. All were enjoined to propagate the CCP's anti-Japanese stance among the people and its policies on the nationalities, such as protection of the freedom of religious belief and respect for the customs and habits of the Hui people, as well as opposition to great Han chauvinism and to the oppression of the Hui people by Han officials.⁷⁸ As they passed through Hui areas of Ningxia in October 1935, the Red Army apparently received friendly treatment from the people, who were happy to give them grain and vegetables. In one place, the people are said to have lined the streets to greet them as they entered. In another, Mao Zedong 'visited the mosque, accompanied by the imam'.⁷⁹ Political leaders had seldom made such token gestures of respect for the minority's religion and local clergy. Local people were favourably impressed.⁸⁰

The attacks on the CCP by the Yi of Xikang were important exceptions to the pattern of general goodwill. More seriously for the Red Army, the Tibetans and others of the swampy grasslands of south-eastern Qinghai were totally hostile to the Long Marchers and many tried to kill them, in some cases by rolling large boulders over those who climbed the nearby mountains. One female leader threatened to boil anyone alive who helped the marchers. Red Army members killed in combat with minority nationalities while crossing the grasslands are reported to have been in the hundreds.⁸¹

Other than the Mongols, who are discussed in Chapter 4 because of their interaction with the Japanese, the Hui had the most extensive dealings with the Communists of those minority nationalities in the north-western soviet areas. Early in 1932, the Red Army had succeeded in establishing a Hui soviet in Gansu which, although small in scale, did succeed in setting up peasant associations, seizing some land from landlords, and recruiting Hui cadres and soldiers.⁸² The local warlord of Ningxia, Ma Hongkui, was a Hui, but had aroused the enmity of many of the local people through his system of conscription, which compelled all young men except first sons to join the army. His strategy against the Red Army was to aver that it would kill Muslims, practise religious persecution, and force people to share both wives and property if it ever got into power.

In 1936, the Red Army was able to seize and hold some terri-

tory centred on Tongxin county in the south of Ningxia province. It thus added to its cohort of Muslim cadres. These it employed to attempt to convince the people that it would implement political and economic equality between Hui and Han, practise freedom of religion, and protect mosques. It promised to set up an autonomous Hui government and to protect Muslim culture in all ways. In addition, the Red Army announced that it would carry out its normal policies of abolishing surtaxes and conscription.

During the time it controlled the area, the Muslim soviet was able to put quite a few of the CCP's policies into effect. Some land was redistributed and young people organized their own 'liberation associations'. Edgar Snow, who visited the area before the autonomous government was formally established, argues that 'the autonomy slogan' was one with which the Hui strongly agreed because they had been demanding it for several years. He believed that 'among the soldiers themselves it appeared that some of the historical racial animosity was being overcome, or gradually metamorphosed into class antagonism'.⁸³ What he found most surprising, and impressive, was that against this backdrop of hatred the CCP were able to create the nucleus of a Chinese Hui Red Army.⁸⁴

The first county-level political power which the CCP was able to set up among the minority nationalities was the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia-Yuhai County Hui Autonomous Government, which was formally established at a meeting held in the Tongxin mosque from 20 to 22 October 1936 and attended by some 300 people.⁸⁵ The meeting appointed as Chairman of the Government the forty-four-year-old Hui Ma Hefu. In addition, it adopted a number of regulations for the areas under its control, such as a government programme, land regulations, and measures for the reduction of land rent and interest on loans. This formally established autonomous government was able to exercise effective power for less than six months. The Red Army withdrew from the Yuhai area late in 1936, leaving the newly established Hui government prey to Ma Hongkui's troops. The autonomous government was forced to go underground. Ma Hefu's whereabouts were betrayed to Ma Hongkui, who had him arrested at the end of February 1937. He was tortured to extract information and a recantation, and interrogated by Ma Hongkui himself. When these measures failed to produce the desired results, Ma Hongkui had him executed outside Tongxin on 3 April 1937.⁸⁶

At the end of 1939, Mao Zedong developed some ideas on 'the

Chinese nation' and included several references to the minorities. He described China as a country with a very large population composed of many nationalities, including Mongols, Hui, Tibetans, Uygurs, Miao, Yi, Zhuang, Bouyei (whom Mao calls Zhongjia), and Koreans. These nationalities shared a hatred of foreign oppression and the willingness to resort to rebellion to shake it off. 'They favour a union on the basis of equality but are against the oppression of one nationality by another'.⁸⁷ Most of these ideas were later incorporated into official PRC policy on the minorities, but it is striking that they do not include the right to secession. On the contrary, they imply the precise converse.

The first provincial-level government which the CCP was able to establish in a nationality area and base on its already worked out autonomy policies was the Inner Mongolian autonomous region. Alone among all the PRC's autonomous territories it was actually set up before the People's Republic itself, on 1 May 1947.

Immediately after Japan's defeat, various political factions competed to fill the power vacuum in Inner Mongolia. These included the National Government and the CCP, as well as Mongols from both Inner Mongolia and the independent Mongolian People's Republic (MPR). With Japan's defeat, Soviet and MPR troops had moved into the Xing'an region—the Mongolian areas of the just collapsed Japanese state of Manchuria—and into Mongolian areas to the south-west as well. Most Mongols wanted a single Inner Mongolia in place of the several regions which had existed under the Japanese, but few were enthusiastic about seceding from China or joining the MPR. The MPR government itself was nervous about what it would do with the large number of Han people who had by this time settled in Inner Mongolia.

Certainly the CCP's wish was clear: it wanted an autonomous Inner Mongolia which was part of China. It sent Ulanhu, a prominent Mongol leftist who had spent the war years in Yan'an, to organize on behalf of its policy. At first he succeeded in subverting and then replacing the provisional government which the Soviet Union had set up in the Xing'an region. On 3 April 1946, after a good deal of political manoeuvring, the CCP succeeded in organizing a conference; the resolution adopted declared that Inner Mongolia would be reunited on the basis of an 'autonomy of equality, not an autonomy of independence', which 'could be realized only with the leadership and help of the CCP'.⁸⁸ Just over a year later, Ulanhu became the leader of the new autonomous

region. On 1 July 1947, he also became Secretary of the Inner Mongolian CCP Work Committee, established the same day.

Conclusion

The CCP thus shared with Republican governments a very strong desire to maintain China's national unity. It differed in its more generally favourable attitude towards autonomy and in being very much less dismissive of the minorities. Despite variations among thinkers, the policies of central Republican governments at most times were quite definitely assimilative. The minorities of Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guizhou posed no threat to China's national unity, and for that reason successive governments cared very little about them and felt able to ignore them.

By contrast, Xinjiang posed a threat to national unity because of its secessionist and other rebellions against Chinese rule. But despite the large numbers killed in suppressing the rebellions, especially those of the 1930s, Xinjiang was actually more a success story than a failure from the point of view of the central government because Xinjiang remained under Chinese, and even Han, rule. Moreover, the decade of Sheng Shicai did at least see a serious attempt to implement a reasonably coherent policy towards the minority nationalities. While it ended in disaster, such an attempt was more the exception than the rule in Republican China.

The successive governments of the Republic were keen to exert power in Tibet. Certainly all of them vehemently resisted any suggestion of Tibetan independence. Yet the reality was that, although no declaration of independence ever won international, let alone Chinese, support, none of the warlord governments nor that of Chiang Kaishek was able to exert effective power in Tibet. The region went its own way in practice and, by the 1940s, even handled its own foreign policy, while China was too weakened by the Japanese invasion to prevent such developments.

Although no Republican government could thus claim its policy in Tibet as successful, by far its worst failure was in Mongolia. It was there that the Chinese government had forced upon it what was in its eyes the ultimate disaster, the successful secession of one of its territories, Outer Mongolia.

One Western writer has described the Guomindang policy towards the minorities as 'weak'.⁸⁹ It is an apt word, but an even

more appropriate description may well be 'uneven'. Moreover, it was not only in the minority areas where the Guomindang failed to impose its own government consistently. Successive Republican governments were forced to confront, not only secessionist Mongols and Uygurs, but also Japanese invaders and recalcitrant and semi-independent warlords. Under the warlord governments, the Han regions actually posed a more serious threat to national unity than did those of the minorities, with the exception of Outer Mongolia.

Particularistic or parochial local political structures—one of the measures of modernity—remained very strong during the period of the Republic. In fact, since the central government was actually weaker during most of the period than it had been in the preceding one, such structures may have been even stronger than they had been earlier. From this single point of view, a comparison between the late Qing and Republican periods might actually show a retreat rather than an advance in modernization in the first half of the twentieth century. Correspondingly, the extent to which the various nationalities and parts of Chinese society interacted and complemented each other showed but a poor record of success in achieving national unity and integration.

Nevertheless, for all their weaknesses, the record of the successive central Chinese governments in terms of national unity and integration was by no means a total failure. Chiang Kaishek did not sit back and allow the country to fall apart. On the eve of its overthrow, his government was the only one—other than that of the MPR—to have gained international recognition for its control over those territories which had formed part of China at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Foreign Impact on China's Border Regions

FROM 1900 to 1949, domestic developments and foreign relations were closely linked. However, these two aspects of the history of China's nationality areas can most certainly be regarded as distinct. The previous chapter focused on policy and domestic developments in the nationality areas, and especially the 'frontier' regions. The present chapter analyzes foreign impacts on China's minority regions, mainly those near China's external borders. It covers only those border regions where foreign impact intermingled most importantly with nationality questions: the areas of British impact on Tibet, of Russian and then Soviet impact on northern China, and of Japanese impact in China's north-east.

It is evident that the extent of influence of the various major foreign powers differed widely. It is hardly surprising that, in general, the powers with territory or colonies nearest China's vast frontier regions tended to strongly dominate those regions. Thus Britain, which controlled South Asia and Burma as colonies, was most influential in Tibet and part of Yunnan. Russia, and then the Soviet Union, spanned Xinjiang in the north-west and Mongolia in the north with their influence, while Japan's power was felt most keenly in the north-east and in Mongolian and even some Hui regions. From its colonies in Indo-china, France extended its influence to some extent into Guangxi and Yunnan. However, its impact on the minorities was limited mainly to missionary activity, which was not very successful anyway, and was minimal in comparison with that of the other three powers.

To some extent there were rivalries among the powers in all these regions. The fact of British dominance in Tibet did not totally exclude Russian or Japanese influence. For a time, Anglo-Russian rivalry was intense in Xinjiang. However, the keenest rivalry was in Mongolia and the north-east, where Japan fought against and in much of the region later replaced Russian or Soviet influence, until it was itself defeated in 1945.

There was foreign impact on Chinese nationality areas other than those near borders. For example, British missionaries were

Policies towards the Minority Nationalities, 1949–1993

THE Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in October 1949 after a long and bitter revolutionary process. It founded a state called the People's Republic of China (PRC), which was to exercise a profound impact on the minorities, as it did on the people as a whole. Until their deaths in 1976, the two main PRC leaders were Mao Zedong, Chairman of the CCP, and Zhou Enlai, Premier of the State Council, the equivalent of Prime Minister. Having overthrown the Guomindang, the CCP established a monopoly of power in China along Marxist-Leninist lines, declaring itself the vanguard of the proletariat. The CCP devised and implemented a revolution in society which, while not nearly as egalitarian as it claimed to be, did eliminate some of the most blatant inequities of the past. In particular, it tore down the old class structure, replacing it with one claiming to be based on Marxist principles which gave the proletariat pre-eminence in society.

In 1966, Mao Zedong moved the PRC to a much more radical phase, which he called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. He claimed that the bourgeoisie had infiltrated the CCP and that a new and more egalitarian revolution was necessary to remove it. One of the main targets of the Cultural Revolution was Deng Xiaoping, whom Mao claimed was advocating bourgeois policies and taking the capitalist road.

No sooner did Mao die in September 1976 than his main followers in the ideals of the Cultural Revolution, the radical 'gang of four', were overthrown in a *coup d'état*. This brought about tremendous change, immediately in China's political atmosphere and over time in its political culture. However, on the whole, China was not firmly set on the road to reform until the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 gave top priority to the four modernizations of industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defence, and established Deng Xiaoping firmly in power. Among these 'four modernizations', that of science and technology was entirely consonant with the notion that the target of modernization studies

should be 'the process by which societies have been and are being transformed under the impact of the scientific and technological revolution'.¹ The four modernizations also targeted industry, and Deng Xiaoping was very clear about his enthusiasm to raise the standard of living everywhere in China. Although Deng Xiaoping's definition of modernization may not have identical with that adopted in this book, the main strands were actually very similar.

The reform policies Deng instituted on the basis of these four modernizations totally negated the Cultural Revolution and brought much more freedom to China's economy and political culture. Although Deng was prepared to allow a considerable measure of private enterprise in China, he was absolutely determined that the CCP should maintain its monopoly of political power. From April to June 1989, massive demonstrations led by students took place in Beijing and many other cities, calling for a greater degree of freedom and democracy. These were suppressed in a massacre on the night of 3-4 June, after which Deng Xiaoping claimed that a counter-revolutionary rebellion had been quelled. The crisis had a severe effect on Chinese politics, but did not end the reform policies which Deng had begun. Whether the CCP would have been overthrown but for the suppression of the demonstrations remains a moot point. Whereas the years 1989 to 1991 saw the overthrow of most of the world's other Marxist-Leninist governments, the CCP was able to defy the world trend and, at the time of writing, retained a monopoly of state power in China.

On the whole, the minorities have expected and received somewhat better treatment under the CCP than under the Guomindang. On one point, however, the CCP has always been similar to the Guomindang. It places an extremely high priority on national unity. Its first task was to effectively unify the state it had created. Next to its own overthrow, its greatest fear has always been the secession of nationality regions and the consequent disintegration of the PRC.

Definition, Identification, and Identity

One of the major theoretical differences between the CCP and the Guomindang has been in their conceptions of what precisely constitutes a nationality. The definition of the term *minzu*, or nationality, which social scientists and authorities in the PRC quote

most regularly is that articulated by Stalin in 1913: 'A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture'. Stalin goes on to emphasize that 'none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation'. Moreover, even if one of these characteristics is lacking, then 'the nation ceases to be a nation'.²

Stalin's identification of four basic criteria for a nationality—common language, common territory, common economic life, and common culture—is the basis of all thinking about the nature of a nationality in the PRC.³ Not all social scientists, however, accept it uncritically. While some have been prepared to accept its applicability to all nationalities in all periods of history, others have argued that it should be used only for 'modern' nationalities, meaning those in the advanced stage of capitalism or in the socialist phase of development.⁴ However, neither of these two approaches would deny its applicability to the PRC, even if the first appears to absolve the Guomindang for not applying it to China during the Republican period.

The rigid application of Stalin's four vital criteria to the situation in China can cause problems. For instance, the Hui and the Manchus, whom all in China are prepared to recognize as nationalities, are scattered over many parts of China and it is doubtful if the members of either can be said to inhabit a common territory. The great majority of people in both groups speak Chinese as their native language. It is true that there are still a few Manchus who speak Manchu, and the Hui in Lhasa speak Tibetan and Chinese. None the less, the members of these two nationalities, the Hui and the Manchus, do not share their own common languages.⁵

In China itself there have been two responses to this dilemma. The more common one is to ignore or downplay Stalin's demand that none of the four criteria could be omitted from any identification. As one authority quite rightly points out, a common territory may be necessary for a nationality 'but a definite territory is not necessarily inhabited by people all of the same nationality, and at the same time the people of one nationality may live in various places'.⁶ The last of the four criteria, the 'psychological make-up manifested in a common culture', is the most difficult because culture is itself not always easy to define and identify. This is especially the case in the modern world, where cultural

influences flow so readily from powerful nationalities to others, and even the other way around. A major Chinese theoretical study of nationalities claims that most interested academics have 'creatively and flexibly applied the four criteria of the Marxist-Leninist definition of a nationality to the work of nationality identification under the leadership of the Party'.⁷ In other words, it is necessary neither to throw Stalin's ideas overboard nor to apply them rigidly.

The second response has been a partial challenge to Stalin's definition. In the 1980s and 1990s, there have been social scientists who have argued in favour of replacing the 'psychological make-up manifested in a common culture' with a 'common national consciousness and national sentiment'.⁸ The anthropologist Yang Kun suggested in 1984 that, since Stalin's definition applied only to bourgeois nationalities, it might be necessary to *add* the factors of 'national consciousness and national sentiment' to those already enunciated by Stalin, in order to establish a definition of a nationality applying to any period in history.⁹ The chief implication of these two differences is that either of them allows the members of nationalities themselves a final say in whether they constitute a nationality or not. Self-perception becomes a criterion. Officials I interviewed on this matter in the 1990s, both at the State Nationalities' Affairs Commission in Beijing and in several provincial or regional capitals, have been divided over this view, with most rejecting it, but a few finding it quite acceptable. I have also met academics, including ethnologists, still committed to it. One should note that neither of these variations on Stalin's definition challenges the other three of his criteria, in other words, common language, common territory, and common economic life. Moreover, Yang Kun's merely adds to, but does not replace, common culture.¹⁰

Identification of nationalities on the basis of Stalin's definition was an early task of the PRC government. From 1953 it sent out special identification groups, including ethnologists such as Fei Xiaotong, to check the validity of claims being made by various groups for status as minority nationalities. Since the new government had made it known that it regarded the minorities as equals, over 400 groups registered as nationalities by 1955.

In 1956, the government established sixteen 'investigation teams' (*diao cha zu*), with a total of over 1,000 people, and sent them to the sixteen provinces and regions of China with minority populations.¹¹

The members included people educated in a variety of disciplines, including linguists, archeologists, historians, economists, and experts in literature and the arts. The teams were supposed to eat, live, labour, relax, and study with the people they were investigating, as well as train ethnologists from among the minorities themselves.¹² After all this investigation and the application of Stalin's definition, only a portion of those who had registered as nationalities were accepted; by 1979 PRC officials had formally determined that there were fifty-five minorities which, with the majority Han, made altogether fifty-six nationalities in China.¹³

According to the 1990 census, 749,341 people belonged to 'not yet identified nationalities', a smaller number than the 1982 census figure of 879,201,¹⁴ but still a substantial group. In the 1980s, there was still debate over particular groups which regard themselves as separate nationalities, but were not so recognized by the State Nationalities' Affairs Commission.¹⁵ However, officials of the central State Nationalities' Affairs Commission informed me in 1990 that they considered the work of identifying nationalities virtually complete and were unlikely to accept any of the outstanding claims. That being the case, most or all of the remaining 749,341 people could more readily be allocated to already recognised nationalities than to any not yet identified. It does not necessarily follow that the communities themselves have all accepted their state-assigned categories, nor say anything about the view of their neighbouring communities. One candidate for inclusion among those not recognized is the Dengs, who live in the south-eastern tip of Tibet. They consider themselves a nationality separate from the Tibetans and are even included among the official statistics for the autonomous region.¹⁶ While in Tibet in 1990, the present writer learned that they had even threatened secession from the PRC if they were not officially recognized as a nationality. However, the Tibetan authorities are strongly against this move, arguing that it would split the Tibetan nationality, and the central government shows absolutely no willingness to defy the Tibetans on such a matter. It is certainly ironic to find precisely the same argument used both by the Chinese to keep Tibet as part of China and by the Tibetans to prevent the recognition of another nationality.¹⁷

Another minority which does not accept the state's categorization is the Shuitian people of Yunnan, just on the border with Sichuan, whom the state considers part of the Yi. According to

Stevan Harrell, the Han neighbours of the Shuitian are aware of their claim of separate status, but 'it is not much of an issue for them'.¹⁸ While in Chong'an, southern Guizhou, for a Miao festival gathering in November 1990, the present writer learned that a great many of the nearly 30,000 participants actually belonged to a group which the state classified as Miao, but which saw itself as a separate nationality called Gejia. Their grounds for this separate identification are differences in language, religion, village style, and clothing. Since the women were dressed in traditional dress for the festival, the differences in clothing were easily checked. One Han neighbour with whom I was able to discuss this matter accepted the Gejia claim and believed that the state would eventually do so too, but officials at the central State Nationalities' Affairs Commission in Beijing later told me that they thought it most unlikely that the Gejia would be accepted as a separate nationality by the state in the foreseeable future.

There was a sharp increase in the sense of national identity among the nationalities of China in the 1980s. Whereas before 1949 many members of the minorities even tried to hide their identity, they are now proud of it, in most cases with the direct encouragement of the state. This trend appears to have begun in the 1950s, but receded during the Cultural Revolution. In the 1980s, pride in ethnic identification became a potent force in the PRC. While such a matter is inevitably difficult to quantify, I found it corroborated by my own contacts with a range of minority people. A Bai veterinary surgeon whom I met by pure chance in Dali in 1985, but who nevertheless took me round several villages and even to a wedding, impressed me strongly with his pride in belonging to the Bai nationality. He referred repeatedly to Bai features in the villages we visited, his manner indicating clearly that he was conscious of something worth showing off. Several Zhuang scholars whom I met through private rather than official contacts in 1992 left me with a strong impression of their pride in their Zhuang identity, which they expressed through their shining enthusiasm for Zhuang art, language, and history. These are nationalities traditionally regarded as almost assimilated with the Han. Dru Gladney's path-breaking work has found strong and united ethnic identity among the Hui, whom many had previously considered hardly different from the Han, except in their Muslim faith.¹⁹ Among nationalities with a more powerful cultural and historical tradition, and a stronger tradition of separateness, the feeling of

identity in the 1980s was more intense still. The most obvious example is, of course, the Tibetans. During my visit to the Social Sciences Academy in Lhasa, I encountered Tibetan scholars with an enormous enthusiasm for researching their own traditions, and even some Han academics pursuing similar study.

Policy to the Late 1950s

The basic policy of the PRC towards its minority nationalities is laid down in Article 3 of the first Constitution, which was adopted by the First National People's Congress on 20 September 1954. It says:

The People's Republic of China is a unitary multinational state. All the nationalities are equal. Discrimination against or oppression of any nationality, and acts which undermine the unity of the nationalities, are prohibited.

All the nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own customs and ways.

Regional autonomy applies in areas where a minority nationality lives in a compact community. All the national autonomous areas are inseparable parts of the People's Republic of China.²⁰

There are two very clear principles here which, at least in theory, have remained in force throughout the entire period of the PRC. These are that the nationalities should all be treated equally and have the right to autonomy. However, even the slightest hint of secession or independence, of breaking up the 'unity' of the PRC, must be prevented at all costs. Even though it is not a term found in official sources relating to PRC government policy, this combination of principles is, along the spectrum of concepts outlined in Chapter 1, closer to 'integration' than to either 'pluralism' at the one end or 'assimilation' on the other.²¹ Since modernization was defined in Chapter 1 to include equality among peoples, this basic policy is, at least in theory, a step in that direction. Moreover, although with a different emphasis, it is consistent with international human rights law, which specifies the minorities' right to their own culture, language, and religion, but is non-committal about secession from a larger state or rights to independence.²²

The authorities have tried to avoid two evils, either of which

militates against one or other of these principles. The first is 'great nationality chauvinism', which in practice mainly means great Han chauvinism. It is the tendency of the Han and other dominant nationalities to look down upon, to discriminate against, or otherwise ill-treat the smaller or weaker nationalities. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the other evil, that of local nationalism, meaning the tendency of minority nationalities to secede from the PRC. To some extent, the PRC authorities' attitude to its minorities has swung like a pendulum in some periods emphasizing great Han chauvinism as the more serious evil, in others making more attempts to oppose local nationalism.

The CCP initially tried to avoid open class struggle among the minorities as far as it could. The ideal behind this policy of 'reform by peaceful negotiation' was to work together with the old ruling classes, trying to persuade them to accept and even encourage the new order, rather than setting them up as the enemy who had to be punished. Attempts were made to prevent their standard of living from falling. In sharp contrast with the treatment meted out to Han landlords during the land reform, the overlords of many of the minorities were not punished for past oppression against the people. Those minorities in which class divisions were unimportant or lacking, such as some of the most backward of Yunnan province like the Va and the Jingpo, were taken directly from tribal to co-operative ownership.²³

Because it was necessary for the minorities to govern themselves in accordance with the policies of the CCP, early efforts were made to train minority cadres. On 24 November 1950, the Central People's Government approved 'A Tentative Plan for the Training of Minority Cadres'. Under the plan, the government was to train political, vocational, and technical cadres from the nationalities themselves to develop the minority areas. At the same time, it also envisaged the training of 'an adequate number of Han cadres willing to engage in minority work'. To carry out the plan, the government formally set up the Central Institute for Nationalities in Beijing on 11 June 1951. It had branches in various relevant parts of the country, and the various provinces were asked to set up minority cadres schools as appropriate.²⁴ From the beginning, PRC leaders asserted the principle that the Han should assist the other nationalities economically and culturally. According to Government Deputy Chairman Liu Shaoqi in his 'Report on the Draft Constitution' of 1954, this was because the

Han had 'a comparatively higher political, economic, and cultural level than the others'. Liu believed this superiority did not entitle the Han to 'put on airs' towards the other nationalities, but rather imposed on the Han an obligation to help in their development.²⁵

During the first few years of the PRC, the new regime asserted its authority over those territories it regarded as part of China. As previously discussed, some of those in the north-eastern part of China had been controlled by the CCP for some years before the establishment of the PRC and the Inner Mongolian autonomous region had been set up as early as 1947. These territories posed very little problem for the new government. In the case of Yanbian, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 gave the CCP a good opportunity to consolidate its own rule by inciting hatred of foreign imperialism. The Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture was formally set up on 3 September 1952, the first of the autonomous prefectures and among the earliest of all the autonomous areas.

From the beginning, Yanbian was among the most prominent examples of the success of autonomy, measured in terms of the number of skilled, professional, and political cadres who belonged to the relevant nationality. The proportion of Korean cadres was greater than their proportion of the total population. In 1952, when the autonomous prefecture was set up, Koreans made up 74 per cent of the total population of Yanbian, while the prefecture's 6,090 Korean cadres accounted for 78 per cent of the total. Over the following years there was substantial Han migration to the area, but the proportion of Han cadres did not grow as fast as the total Han population. Thus, in 1962, Koreans were only 50.4 per cent of Yanbian's population, but Korean cadres were 64 per cent of the total.²⁶

In the Uygur territory in Xinjiang in the far north-west of China, Burhan Shahidi, who had been appointed by Chiang Kaishek's National Government as Chairman of Xinjiang at the end of 1948, cabled his surrender and allegiance to the CCP on 26 September 1949, just before the PRC itself was formally established. Unlike the Koreans, and to some extent the Mongols, the Uygurs' experience of socialism was more likely to turn them against it than enlist their support. Yet, for the first few years, the CCP actually did quite well in Xinjiang. The sensible policies pursued by a capable administration were the primary reason. Party control remained in the hands of Han leaders, especially Wang Enmao

and Wang Zhen, while the setting up of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region in 1955 put government into the hands of minority leaders, such as Seyfettin Azizi and Burhan. McMillen's view is that, through pursuing 'moderate and pragmatic policies', Wang Enmao was able to consolidate CCP and Han control 'without unduly provoking the sensitivities of the majority non-Han (and primarily Islamic) indigenous population'.²⁷ Just as in other nationality areas, one of these 'moderate' policies was directed towards recruiting cadres from the minorities themselves, emphasizing quantity rather than political quality and accepting people from a 'rather broad' social base.²⁸

In Yunnan and Guangxi, anti-CCP guerrillas operated from bases in remote hill areas for several years. In Guangxi, the Zhuang people were generally more enthusiastic about the new government than the Han, but in Yunnan, the strongest resistance to CCP rule came from the minorities. As late as 1955, a PRC report from Yunnan claimed that 'enemy' forces in the frontier minority regions were still plundering, killing, and spreading rumours to disrupt the new regime. The report acknowledged frankly that these forces were scheming 'to spoil nationality relations and create nationality divisions, and to wreck the national defense of the motherland'.²⁹

In Ninglang, in north-western Yunnan near the border with Sichuan, the Norsu branch of the Yi minority adopted a law abolishing slavery early in 1957.³⁰ Despite attempts to conciliate the slave-owners and work with them, there was, not surprisingly, some opposition from them—some of it violent. Alan Winnington was told of plans by some slave-owners to carry out 'a concerted mass murder of the slaves' as part of their defiance of the law.³¹ Reactions of this kind were to be expected in a society where violence had long been so prevalent that it could reasonably be described as a way of life. However, the most serious problem was the helplessness of the slaves themselves who, though glad to be rid of their masters, found it very difficult to cope with their newly found freedom. Alan Winnington, after describing at some length the most ghastly conditions endured by the slaves, writes that, according to the CCP cadres, 'far more difficult than dealing with the slave-owners' was getting the slaves 'to depend on themselves'.³²

The territory which caused the greatest problems for the CCP government, and has done so ever since, was Tibet. PLA troops led by Zhang Guohua advanced towards Tibet late in 1950 and, after a fierce week-long battle, captured Qabdo (Chamdo) on 19

October. Qabdo was then regarded by the PRC, as it had been by Chiang Kaishek's government, as part of Xikang province.³³ The PLA advanced to the west, encountering no further military resistance, but did not occupy Lhasa for the time being. The Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa to Yadong in the Chumbi Valley in December and appointed Nga-phod Ngag-dbang 'jigs-med (more usually spelled as Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme) and others to negotiate on his behalf with the central government. On 23 May 1951, the Tibetan representatives and those of the PRC signed the Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet. This declared that Tibet would become a part of the PRC, with Chinese authorities handling Tibet's external affairs and the PLA entitled to enter Tibet, but also that the Tibetans would have the right to 'exercise national regional autonomy'.³⁴ In other words, it reflected the two basic principles of what was already PRC policy: autonomy, but no secession. The PLA, which had halted its operations pending the negotiations, now advanced towards Lhasa, the first troops arriving there on 9 September 1951.³⁵

According to John Avedon, the Dalai Lama, believing himself defeated by the Measures, decided to go abroad to carry on an anti-Chinese struggle, but was dissuaded from this course by, among others, the abbots of the three great monasteries of Lhasa and vicinity, the 'Bras-spungs, Se-ra, and Dga'-ldan. In this account, the Dalai Lama was completely against the Measures right from the start because they stated that Tibet would 'return' to the PRC.³⁶ On 20 June 1959, just after his escape to India, the Dalai Lama issued a statement in Mussoorie, in which he repudiated the Measures on the grounds that his 'representatives were compelled to sign the agreement under threat of further military operations against Tibet by the invading armies of China leading to utter ravage and ruin of the country'.³⁷ Chinese sources, on the other hand, claim that on 24 October, after returning to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama cabled Mao Zedong affirming the authority of Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme to negotiate on behalf of Tibet. 'The local Tibetan government as well as the ecclesiastics and secular people un-animously support this agreement', the cable read.³⁸ To the present writer, these accounts do not contradict the Dalai Lama's decision to give in at this stage. It is quite possible that, after returning to Lhasa, the sixteen-year-old Dalai Lama saw no point in further resistance and, though very reluctantly, planned to make the best of the inevitable fact that China would be in control of Tibet.

It has been argued that the clauses of the 1951 Measures were in fact rather loose and designed to allow the Chinese somewhat more leeway than appeared at first sight. What is not in doubt is that the Tibetan representatives did sign the Measures and that the Dalai Lama confirmed it 'by giving it practical effect'. He abided by its provisions and demanded that the Chinese do the same.³⁹ He accepted the position as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet autonomous region and his speech at its inaugural meeting in April 1956 was replete with praise for Mao and enthusiasm for the CCP's policies on nationalities.⁴⁰ The Han soldiers and civilians acted well towards the local people in the early years. According to a Western study, 'Tibetan nobles and former officials currently in exile now admit that, in comparison, the behaviour of Tibetan officials left much to be desired'.⁴¹ Cadres were taught to respect local customs and etiquette and even to avoid bringing up communism and class struggle.

The Eighth Congress of the CCP met in September 1956 in a general atmosphere of confidence, as concerned both internal and external policy. Regarding the problem of minority nationalities, it commented that, in balancing great nation chauvinism and local nationalism, 'special attention must be paid to the prevention and correction of tendencies of great-Hanism'.⁴² This appeared to signal a relatively tolerant and benign attitude towards the minority nationalities at a time when China had established a fair degree of national stability.

The period from 1950 to 1958 saw the establishment of the great majority of the autonomous areas. Three autonomous regions were set up during the 1950s, the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on 1 October 1955, the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region on 15 March 1958, and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region on 25 October 1958. Between November 1950 and April 1958, twenty-nine autonomous prefectures were established. Of the autonomous counties, which were called banners in Inner Mongolia, fifty-four were set up between May 1950 and September 1958, the vast majority before 1957.⁴³

The Period from the Late 1950s to the Late 1970s

After a generally promising beginning, in which the CCP treated the nationalities considerably better than previous regimes had

done, relations between Han and minorities began to deteriorate in 1957.⁴⁴ The Great Leap Forward of 1958 brought on a series of radical leftist programmes which moved China's overall policy of 'integration' further along the spectrum towards 'assimilation'. The reforms which were part of the Great Leap Forward were immediately applied to many of the minorities. For example, the Uygurs, Koreans, Mongols, and Miao set up communes in 1958, the same year as the Han. In some cases drastic reform resulted in serious tensions and even violence. In Xinjiang, there was militant opposition to the reforms in 1958 and 1959, but according to Dreyer, 'the resistance was apparently uncoordinated and was put down without great difficulty'.⁴⁵ The worst trouble came in the Tibetan areas. The Khampas, who were Tibetans inhabiting that eastern part of Tibet which the Tibetans knew as Kham, had been resisting Han-led land reform for some time. The Khampas formed guerrilla groups, which took control over considerable territory. In the autumn of 1958, they attacked the Chinese near a market town south of the Brahmaputra River, killing several thousand of them.⁴⁶

In March the next year a rebellion broke out in Lhasa. It was sparked by a trivial incident involving a Chinese invitation to the Dalai Lama to a theatrical performance at their military headquarters. The initiative came from the Khampas from outside Lhasa, who led and manned the uprising.⁴⁷ The Chinese authorities blamed foreign interference (discussed in much greater detail in the next chapter) and the old serf-owning classes who would not give up their privileges. The revolt was quickly put down. Many tens of thousands of Tibetans took refuge in India and Nepal,⁴⁸ among them the Dalai Lama, who set up a government-in-exile in Dharamsala, in the Punjab, India. The refugees said the revolt was the result of Chinese threats to destroy Tibetan culture and the PRC's tyrannical regime. The Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet of the International Commission of Jurists charged the Chinese with 'the large-scale violation of the most basic of human rights' by acts of killing, rape, torture, and arbitrary interference with privacy, home, and family.⁴⁹ It also accused China of trying to destroy the Tibetan religion.

In the event, the rebellion achieved precisely the opposite result from the one intended. Its net effect was not to encourage Tibet's independence, but 'to facilitate the integration of Tibet into the regular administrative system of China'.⁵⁰ The very month after

the revolt, the Panchen Lama, next to the Dalai Lama the most important religious and civil leader in Tibet, attended a meeting of the National People's Congress, which decided to carry out 'democratic reforms' in Tibet. These involved such actions as overthrowing the serf system, which had persisted even through the 1950s due to the autonomy required by the May 1951 Measures. On 9 September 1965, the Tibet autonomous region was formally established.

Even before the Cultural Revolution had started, the CCP's theoretical journal *Red Flag* (*Hongqi*) had specified 'two basic premises' for the resolution of nationality problems. The first was that, since classes exist within every nationality, the attainment for equality and improvement for a nationality depended on the working people of that nationality reaching equality and development. The other premise was that 'the nationality problem can only be resolved through the revolutionary struggle of the broad masses of exploited people'. Since revolutionary struggle was the key, reformist attitudes and policies must be opposed.⁵¹

These two premises made the period of the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) the most assimilative in the history of the PRC. The Cultural Revolution's obsession with class struggle as 'the key link' meant that all social contradictions ritually had to be seen in class terms. Uyghur, Muslim, or Mongol nationalist leaders—and even Han leaders sympathetic to them—were condemned as reactionary class enemies, and national or race resentments were simply ignored or swept under the carpet. The issue of class versus nationality came forward in discussions of the Constitution proposed for the Ninth CCP Congress, held in April 1969. Students and workers in Shanghai who supported the Cultural Revolution attacked the Constitution adopted by the Eighth CCP Congress for 'emphasising nationalism to the exclusion of patriotism and internationalism', which 'in reality creates national schism', an utterly false, even ridiculous interpretation of what the Congress had said. They suggested instead that the new Party Constitution of the Ninth Congress should focus on Mao Zedong's directive that 'national struggle is in the final analysis a question of class struggle'. That way, they argued, the 'unity of all the nationalities on the basis of the thought of Chairman Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong] and the socialist road should be stressed'.⁵² Unfortunately, the Constitutions of both the Ninth and Tenth CCP Congresses adopted similar suggestions. They had very little to say about the

minority nationalities, confining themselves to declaring the need for CCP leadership of the nationalities in the various forms of struggle, especially class struggle.⁵³

The State Constitution adopted by the Fourth National People's Congress on 17 January 1975 retained the concept of the PRC as 'a unitary multi-national state', in which 'the areas where regional national autonomy is exercised are all inalienable parts' of the PRC.⁵⁴ However, although regional autonomy survived in theory, it was in fact downgraded, because no concrete measures were included to ensure its reality. In practice, the Cultural Revolution brought savage and relentless attempts by Han leaders to secure socialist unity, based on the doctrine of class struggle as the key link, with nationality leaders too afraid to do other than kowtow to Beijing. It did not matter how inappropriate class struggle was to the minorities concerned, any more than to the average Han citizen. The idea that the various nationalities should follow their own culture became a casualty of this madness.

During the interregnum between Mao's death in September 1976 and Deng Xiaoping's accession to real power at the end of 1978, China was led by Hua Guofeng. Although neither a charismatic nor inspiring statesman, Hua was a reasonably competent and probably well-intentioned individual confronting the massive job of trying to legitimate his authority in the shadow of the giants Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Hua's regime did little to change nationalities policy. Yet, it did begin a shift away from the assimilative thrust of the Cultural Revolution towards some appreciation of the interests of the nationalities. Hua advocated that the rights of the minority peoples to equality and autonomy 'must be guaranteed without fail'. He also urged Han cadres working in nationality areas to 'learn the area's language and respect its customs and ways'.⁵⁵ These were important issues because they challenged the high-handed manner which Han cadres had got used to adopting towards the 'backward' minorities.

Policy and Reality in the 1980s and Early 1990s

The main change in policy towards the minority nationalities following Cultural Revolution came in 1980. The year began with publication of an article by Zhou Enlai on policy towards the nationalities. Originally a speech given by Zhou on 4 August 1957,

its publication had been suppressed at the time because it did not suit the prevailing ideological trend. In 1980, however, it appeared to enunciate the policies the Deng Xiaoping leadership was trying to implement. Zhou emphasized opposing both big nationality chauvinism and local nationality chauvinism. He also stressed the implementation of national regional auto-nomy and the rights of minorities.⁵⁶

Two months later Ulanhu (d. 1988), a Mongol Politburo member and the highest ranking member of any minority nationality in the CCP, published an article calling for much more effective and real autonomy in the nationality areas. He regarded the 'fusion of nationalities' (*minzu ronghe*) as a long historical process, which should on no account be confused with 'the current programme of practice'. 'We must resolutely oppose the reactionary policy of coercive assimilation (*tonghua*) and negate the fallacies existing in nationality policy', he said.⁵⁷ He was undoubtedly acknowledging that 'assimilation' (*tonghua*) was the policy followed during the Cultural Revolution, and, given the implications of exploitation and oppression inherent in the term, likening the Cultural Revolution's regime to those of the reactionary and feudal past. He also called for far more expenditure of public money on the minority areas, with a view to developing the local economies and cultures and training more minority scientific and technical cadres and skilled workers.

In May 1980, Hu Yaobang (1915-89), then General Secretary of the CCP, and various other central leaders made an inspection tour of Tibet and were shocked at what they found. They agreed with Tibetan leaders on six measures for improving conditions in the region. These included the effective implementation of the policy of autonomy and the rejection of all policies and regulations not suited to Tibet's local conditions; the revival of Tibetan culture, education, and science provided there was no direct contravention of socialist principles; and the commitment that, within two or three years, over two-thirds of government functionaries should be full-time cadres of Tibetan nationality.⁵⁸ The tour and the decisions which resulted from it were a direct acknowledgment of the disaster which had befallen Tibet and other nationality regions due to the Cultural Revolution. They looked forward to a much better deal for the minority nationalities in the 1980s, in particular one in which the members of the minorities themselves would have a much bigger say, provided they did not wish to secede from China.

The priority placed on class and nationality in Marxist-Leninist ideology remained a crucial issue. Following the demotion of class struggle as the key link at the end of 1978, the government now determined to change the major focus back to nationality. On 5 July 1980, a special commentator in the *People's Daily* (p. 5) wrote:

From the point of view of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, nationalities and classes have their own laws governing their emergence, development and extinction. In most cases, the various nationalities . . . came into being after a history of several hundred or several thousand years, and will continue to exist for a long time to come . . . The existence of classes is of much shorter duration than that of nationalities. After the withering away of the former, the latter will remain in existence for a long time. Lenin said: National distinctions 'will continue to exist for a very long time to come, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a worldwide scale'.⁵⁹

In this formulation, class recedes in importance and duration compared to nationality. It renders nonsensical the idea that nationality problems are essentially matters of class, as the Cultural Revolution's theorists had alleged.

The debate established that autonomy for the minorities was in accordance with Marxist, and, thus, CCP policy. In the first half of the 1980s, attempts were made to translate the idea of autonomy for the minority nationalities into law. The State Constitution of 4 December 1982 devoted a considerable amount of space to the minority nationalities. Many of its stipulations are quite standard, for example, that the nationalities are all equal and enjoy the freedom to use their own languages and preserve or reform their own ways and customs. Others attempt to expand the powers of autonomous counties, prefectures, and regions. These are empowered to organize their own local public security forces, but only with the approval of the State Council. Another important stipulation is the requirement that the administrative head of an autonomous region, prefecture, or county be 'a citizen of the nationality, or of one of the nationalities, exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned'.⁶⁰

The Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities was adopted on 31 May 1984 and came into operation on 1 October the same year. It followed very closely the ideas already laid down in the State Constitution of 1982, but further embellished and strengthened them. It allowed the standing committees of the

regional or provincial people's congresses to determine the number and proportion of deputies belonging to the relevant minority or minorities and called for efforts to be made to include more minorities in the governments of the national autonomous areas. It permitted minority areas to adapt or choose not to implement central government laws which did not suit the needs of the autonomous localities. It also encouraged a very considerable degree of autonomy in such fields as education and culture.⁶¹

The Constitution of 1982 states that legal hearings in nationality areas 'should be conducted in the language or languages in common use in the locality'. Indictments, judgments, and other legal documents should be written in the relevant nationality language.⁶² The Nationality Law of 1984 'guarantees the citizens of every nationality the right to use their own nationality spoken and written language in carrying out litigation'. Translations should be provided for participants who do not know the relevant language.⁶³

How genuine was this autonomy in the 1980s? To answer this question, it is first of all necessary to point out the limitations. In many cases, even under these laws, the approval of the central government is necessary for the implementation of autonomously derived regulations. Even more striking is the distinction between State and Party law. Although Party policy has been to demand the training and promotion of cadres from among the minorities, there has never been any suggestion that Party leaders in the nationality areas would need to be members of the relevant nationality. Therefore, for example, although the state leader of Tibet must be a Tibetan, there is no similar requirement for the Party Secretary. The differentiation is very important because, in China, CCP authorities hold far greater power than those of the state.⁶⁴

Yet, even with these weaknesses, the laws on regional autonomy do appear to have made a difference in the nationality areas. Several factors lead to this conclusion. At the top level, substantial and successful efforts were made to increase minority representation. For instance, the First National People's Congress of 1954 had 1,226 members, of whom 178, or 14.5 per cent, were from the minorities. The corresponding proportion of minorities in the National People's Congresses (NPC) of 1959, 1965, 1975, 1978, 1983, and 1988 were, respectively, 12.2, 12.2, 9.3, 10.9, 13.5 and 15.0 per cent. These figures show a decline in the late 1950s, a sharp fall during and probably because of the Cultural Revolution, and then a rise in the 1980s. The minorities' proportional share

of seats in the NPC did not rise above 1954 levels until 1988.⁶⁵ Throughout these years, however, their proportional share of NPC seats was higher than their proportion of China's total population. The Vice-President of the PRC elected by the Sixth National People's Congress on 18 June 1983 was a Mongol, Ulanhu.

At the lowest level, village leaders and their committees are all elected and belong to the nationality of the village people. I was able to talk to numerous heads of minority villages in Guangxi, Guizhou, and elsewhere and found them uniformly proud of having been elected to their position. Although most were members of the CCP, a significant minority were not. One such man, in a Miao village some distance from Kaili in southern Guizhou, seemed very surprised at my asking whether he belonged to the CCP, with the manner of his answer implying he was quite happy to remain aloof from any politics outside his own village and its immediate environs.

Despite the attitude of such individuals, CCP membership remains a signpost of great importance indicating authority in society, because CCP members are still the main power-holding group in China. In 1957, there were about 700,000 CCP members among the minorities, or about 5.5 per cent of the total CCP membership of 12.72 million in that year. By 1990, the number of CCP members among the minority nationalities was 2.8 million,⁶⁶ accounting for about 5.7 per cent of the total.⁶⁷ In other words the proportion was just higher in 1990 than it had been in the 1950s. This corresponds to the situation in the National People's Congress. On the other hand, the proportion of minority members in the CCP is somewhat lower than their proportion of the population as a whole. Moreover, this gap has actually widened in 1990 in comparison with the 1950s. While the proportion of minority CCP members was almost the same in 1957 and 1990, that of the minorities in the total Chinese population rose from 6.06 per cent, according to the 1953 census, to 8.04 in that of 1990 (see Chapter 9).

Neither has the number of minority cadres been proportional to the PRC's minority population. Cadres are personnel who are often trained in Party or political affairs, but also may be technicians, economic managers, educators, or cultural or health workers. At the end of 1981 there were 1.02 million minority cadres, making up 5.4 per cent of the total in all China.⁶⁸ In 1990, there were 2.06 million minority cadres,⁶⁹ who made up about 6.6 per cent of the total. In other words, the absolute number had more

than doubled over the 1980s, and the percentage had also grown, but minorities were still under-represented in the cadre class relative to their population.

A survey of Tibet carried out in 1988 concluded that, while the proportion of Tibetans in local CCP organizations at all levels was generally high, 'the lower the administrative level, the higher the proportion of Tibetan employees' was likely to be.⁷⁰ One report has it that in 1987 there were over 40,000 Tibetan and other minority cadres in Tibet, making up 80 per cent of the total of about 50,000. This compares with one-third in 1962 and the two-thirds which in 1980 had been laid down as a target to be reached within two or three years.⁷¹ The report's figures are very approximate and probably inflate the proportion of the minority cadres. A later and probably more reliable account puts the number of Tibetan, as opposed to all minority, cadres in Tibet at 33,000, or 61.35 per cent of the total,⁷² which according to these figures would be just under 54,000. Figures from the early 1990s show there were about 35,000 Tibetan cadres, making up about two-thirds of the total,⁷³ which would mean that the overall number of cadres had fallen slightly while the proportion of Tibetans rose. It is likely that the government took active measures to increase the number of Tibetans in the wake of the secessionist disturbances of 1987, attempting to assuage Tibetan bitterness towards the Han and Chinese rule.

In the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, which is home to the most populous of China's minority nationalities, the Zhuang, the proportion of minority cadres rose from 28 per cent of the total in 1978 to 33 per cent in 1987.⁷⁴ The Zhuang percentage of Guangxi's population remained stable at just over 33 per cent from the 1950s to the 1980s.⁷⁵ Thus, in the late 1980s, the proportion of Zhuang cadres in Guangxi approximately reflected the region's population as a whole.

A third example, this time at the other end of China, is Yanbian, which still prides itself on its degree of autonomy, as much as it did in the 1950s. In the late 1980s, the population was just under 41 per cent Korean, but Koreans accounted for 51.2 per cent of all cadres.⁷⁶ The Korean proportion of the population has been falling since the early years of the PRC discussed above, but the proportion of Korean cadres still remains over half. A Korean official from the Yanbian Nationalities' Affairs Commission told me in Yanbian in October 1990 that over 50 per cent of judges and

police are Korean, as are the leaders of most units. All government documentation is in both Korean and Chinese, and the normal practice is to place Korean above Chinese.

In 1991, an official publication claimed that all fifty-five minorities had a reasonable body of cadres belonging to their own nationality and described the overall situation as good, but still in need of improvement and strengthening, and falling short of the government's plan.⁷⁷ In recognition of the inadequate number of nationality cadres in proportion to their populations, and of the serious and continuing problems in the nationality areas, the State Nationalities' Affairs Commission decided to establish the Minority Nationalities Research Centre in order to offer advice, information, and suggestions on how to improve the economy and welfare of the minority nationalities. The Centre held its inaugural meeting on 8 September 1988, and the Minister of the State Nationalities' Affairs Commission, Uygur Ismail Ahmat, attended and gave a speech as a sign of the importance of the Centre's work. Shortly afterwards, a Korean senior official of the Centre revealed inadequacies in connection with the Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities. He said that 'various State departments have still failed to work out specific measures for its implementation' and that the prescription that State enterprises in minority areas must be beneficial to minority people had, in many cases, not been put into practice.⁷⁸ The very imperfect implementation of the law concerning the minority nationalities comes as no surprise. Moreover, it raises serious questions as to the effectiveness of autonomy as a whole, especially as it stood in the late 1980s.

Attempted Secession in the Late 1980s and Early 1990s

It was probably events in Tibet which sparked the enormous concerns expressed within the central government in 1988 about minority problems as a whole, for serious trouble had flared up in Lhasa only the year before. In December 1978, Deng Xiaoping initiated a dialogue with the Dalai Lama in an attempt to persuade him to return to China on the PRC's own terms.⁷⁹ Some of the issues are discussed in the next chapter. For now, it is important to note that, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it seemed possible that the tension that had existed since the 1959 rebellion would slacken. After all, in the early and mid-1980s, Tibet was at the forefront

of improvements in policy and conditions in the nationality areas.

Nevertheless, on 27 September 1987 demonstrations, mainly by monks, took place in Lhasa, advocating independence for Tibet and resulting in some arrests. On 1 October, much larger demonstrations followed in which about 2,000 monks and others took part. In the following days protesters held further pro-independence demonstrations, in particular one by about eighty monks from three of Tibet's main monasteries, who marched through Lhasa calling for the total removal of Chinese rule from Tibet. Monks from the great Se-ra Monastery just outside Lhasa gave a statement to tourists appealing for world support and condemning the Chinese for violent rule in their country and for taking away Tibetan human rights: 'The UN should support our just cause', the statement said, calling for 'the lovers of human rights' to 'come to Tibet to see for themselves'.⁸⁰

The Chinese authorities' reaction was harsh. Further troops and police were sent into Lhasa. Some monks were arrested, and others had to be sent to hospital after police beating.⁸¹ The 1 October demonstration flared into violence in which at least six people and probably more were killed. Although accounts as to who had started or perpetrated the violence differed sharply, with Chinese and Tibetans blaming each other, the Western media strongly tended to heap almost all censure on the Chinese. Certainly they had access to more efficient means of violence than did the monks, whose weapons were restricted mainly to petrol bombs and stones.

According to Dawa Norbu, there had from the beginning been a cleavage in the Chinese leadership concerning the dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his supporters, with the 'pragmatic line' much readier to negotiate on his proposals than the 'hard-liners', the latter including some Tibetan cadres who had made it to the top of the new hierarchy in Lhasa. One of the effects of the demonstrations of September and October 1987 was to weaken the influence of the pragmatists to the profit of the 'hard-liners', those less patient with the Dalai Lama. It was above all the Tibetan leaders in Lhasa who saw in the demonstrations 'iron-clad proof' that the pragmatic line was incorrect, as it could lead only to instability.⁸²

Demonstrations continued at intervals during 1988, both in Lhasa and other Tibetan regions. Early in March 1989, they reached a new height, with the serious violence that erupted between police and demonstrators and the looting of Han Chinese houses and shops making the troubles the worst since the 1959 rebellion. The

response of the Chinese authorities, who were terrified of even more dramatic demands for independence to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the 1959 rebellion on 10 March, was to impose martial law.

Foreign witnesses were immediately expelled from Tibet. However, they gave graphic reports of ill-trained, undisciplined, and brutal police making mass arrests of Tibetans. This was a rebellion in the sense that its aim was the overthrow of the current government in Tibet and the establishment of a fully independent nation-state, but the scale of the rebellion was far smaller than in 1959. Western estimates quoted doctors in Lhasa who said the death toll reached about 30.⁸³ The following month the Dalai Lama claimed that between '300 and 800 people might have died' in anti-Chinese unrest since the imposition of martial law.⁸⁴ However, he produced no evidence for his assertion beyond saying that the Chinese would not have sealed Tibet off or expelled all foreign journalists had 'tragic things' not been happening. The present writer visited Tibet in August and September 1990 and questioned various Tibetan intellectuals, Han and Tibetan pedicab and car drivers, and others. All sources agreed that there had been shooting in March 1989, but were also unanimous that the figure of 800 dead was a great exaggeration. Whatever the number of casualties, there is no reason to doubt that the police in Tibet are continuing to crack down very heavily on pro-independence sentiments. Although martial law was formally lifted on 30 April 1990, the situation remained tense, with heavy military and police presence and reports of abuses of human rights.⁸⁵ In May 1993, further demonstrations were put down with relative ease, this time with tear gas. It is crystal clear that, as of the early 1990s, the Chinese have no intention whatever of allowing an independence movement to grow, let alone succeed, in Tibet if they can possibly prevent it. The use of tear gas in May 1993 suggests advances in the techniques of crowd control.

Why did the pro-independence demonstrations begin with such fervour in the northern autumn of 1987? The important foreign relations aspects of this question are discussed in the next chapter. There is little doubt that the wish for independence among the Tibetans had endured since at least the 1959 rebellion, though this is not to say that it has remained equally intense. When I visited Lhasa and its surroundings in September and October 1985 and again in August and September 1990, there seemed to me no

doubt about the antagonism that existed between Han and Tibetans, nor that many Tibetans wanted full independence. In the second visit, the mood was considerably less optimistic about the likelihood of Tibetan independence without very drastic changes in the central government of China.

The trouble flared in 1987 partly because of the gathering pace of reform in China as a whole. At the beginning of 1987, a move began against 'bourgeois liberalization' throughout China in response to the large-scale student demonstrations which had occurred in Shanghai, Beijing, and elsewhere at the end of 1986. However, by the autumn of 1987, reform was advancing at full speed again, symbolized by the high profile assumed by Zhao Ziyang at the Thirteenth CCP Congress, which took place from 25 October to 1 November. That the processes of liberalization and reform should express themselves in secessionist tendencies among minority nationalities is scarcely surprising because a rapid freeing up of an authoritarian system inevitably creates social contradictions and problems for a centralized state. This was shown even more dramatically in the Soviet experience after the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. It may be that the Soviet Union's rapid pace of political reform comparatively was one of the reasons why the movements in favour of national independence among minorities like the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Georgians manifested themselves sooner after the reform policies were put in place than they did in China, and strengthened more quickly.

Corruption had become serious in Tibet, just as it had everywhere else in China. In Tibet, it took the form of Han officials' ignoring the policies of treating the Tibetans as equals, learning their language, and running the region in the interests of the Tibetans. Corruption undoubtedly contributed to a worsening of human rights abuses and of relations between Han and Tibetans, especially from about 1986 on. Just as in other parts of China, it meant that those without the right relationship (*guanxi*) networks would lose out in any struggles for the benefits society had to offer, including good jobs and the best consumer goods.

The final reason was economic. When Hu Yaobang signalled the implementation of new economic policies in Tibet in the early 1980s, there was a period of great optimism and hope that things would improve rapidly. At first they did get better quickly. However, from the mid-1980s, the improvements began to lose their momentum in Tibet, just as in most other parts of China. The standard

of living did continue to rise, but it could no longer satisfy the expectations of people, especially young people. This created severe social tensions and exacerbated the disillusionment of the Tibetans.

There is a consonance between the reasons for the pro-independence demonstrations in Tibet and those for 'freedom and democracy' in Beijing and elsewhere from April to June 1989. There were also some similarities in the result. Martial law was declared both in Lhasa and Beijing. The military crack-down was much more savage in Beijing than in Lhasa because the situation was larger in scale and more serious. None the less, it was brutal in both cases.

The aftermath of the imposition of martial law was similar in some ways too. The army gained in power and assumed a much higher political role. Dissidents, be their cause Tibetan independence or democracy, have been arrested and subjected to ill-treatment in both Lhasa and Beijing. The authorities have shown that, no matter what advocates of human rights in Western countries may think, they have no intention of allowing those tendencies to thrive which threaten Chinese territorial unity or 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'.

Apart from the Tibetans, there have been a few other attempts by minorities to break away from China. In Xinjiang, there has been a fairly strong, but unofficial campaign from Turkey, placing pressure on the Chinese to abandon their claim that 'Eastern Turkistan is an inalienable part of China'.⁸⁶ Following disturbances in Akto in April 1990, which official media claimed involved Islamic separatism, the Xinjiang government moved to tighten laws against Muslim secessionists and kept stricter control over any sign of separatism operating under the cloak of religious activity. When a time bomb was detonated on a parked bus in Ürumqi on 5 February 1992, killing six people and wounding another twenty, the government put the blame on 'Muslim separatists'. As of early 1992, there were said to be some 100,000 troops stationed in the area in case of trouble.⁸⁷

In Inner Mongolia, attempts at secession have been smaller and more easily suppressed. In 1991, two leaders of a study group near Huhhot were sentenced to prison terms of two and three years respectively, while 26 others were put under house arrest charged with 'splittism'. Another group from an area north-west of Huhhot and near the border with Mongolia was suppressed

and its leader arrested along with four others. When a Huhhot history lecturer attempted to pass on information about these actions to foreigners, he also was arrested.⁸⁸

In all cases, the government has reacted with suppression and signs that it does not intend to allow even the beginnings of secession. Since the massacre of 3-4 June 1989 in Beijing, the signs are of an increased and largely successful attempt to regain control everywhere in China, including in the nationality areas. One report from Xinjiang not long after the crisis claimed that Uygur students in Beijing had been sent back to Xinjiang to give the government line on the events in Beijing to their co-nationals; though reluctantly, they had agreed to do so. It also stated that restrictions on talking to foreigners in Xinjiang were being implemented successfully.⁸⁹

Conclusion

The growth of national identity in the 1980s was a feature common to almost all the nationalities with which this writer has been fortunate enough to develop contacts. It has brought with it a desire for independence in a few cases, the most obvious being the Tibetans and the Uygurs, but not among most nationalities. To name just two of the most populous nationalities that also have identifiable homelands, neither the Bai nor the Zhuang has shown any tendency to secede from China. The case of the Mongols and Koreans is more notable, since both peoples run states on China's borders. Although there have been minor and highly localized secessionist movements among the Mongols, up to 1993 the number of public expressions of a wish to transfer from China to the Mongolian People's Republic or its successor State of Mongolia has been quite small. China appears to have had even less trouble with Koreans wishing to secede in favour of Korea.

As long as there is no question of secession, the government is happy to encourage this heightened sense of national identity.⁹⁰ The policy the CCP has adopted in the 1980s and 1990s towards the minorities was part of the thrust towards modernization which Deng Xiaoping had determined was China's top priority. The revival of the government's emphasis on equality and autonomy among the nationalities, as well as the attempts to implement them, indicate that, imperfect though these efforts may be, the

movement towards modernization is being felt on not only the economic plane, but also the social and political.

As in so many other matters, the relations between Han and minority vary greatly from nationality to nationality, from region to region, even from period to period. On the whole, serious incidents showing or causing tensions have been confined to particular nationalities which are very strongly different culturally and in other ways from the Han. Among these, by far the most important examples are the Tibetans and Uygurs. Lesser but still substantial degrees of tension exist between the Han and other Islamic nationalities of Xinjiang, like the Kazaks, and a few peoples in Yunnan and elsewhere, such as the Dai. The Koreans are among the several nationalities which had already become less hostile to the Han by the time the PRC was set up, and have adapted better to the socialist order. A final group, also large, are those nationalities which have become very similar and close to the Han over the centuries and appear to experience minimal tensions in their relationships with them. Examples of such nationalities include the Zhuang of Guangxi, the Manchus of the north-eastern provinces, who in the process of ruling the whole of China from 1644 to 1911 became very strongly sinicized themselves, and the Tujia of western Hunan. The 1950s and the 1980s were the most favourable periods for Han-minority relations, even though there was a decline at the end of each decade; the Cultural Revolution from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s saw a much worse situation. There is a general but clear correlation between policy and the state of relations: the farther policy is from assimilation, the better relations will be.

The policy of autonomy has been implemented with mixed success. Clearly the slogan of 'unity and equality' is more ideal than reality. However, along the spectrum extending from pluralism to assimilation, integration most appropriately describes policy and reality in China, a concept which certainly allows for some autonomy. Although the extent of autonomy varies from nationality to nationality and from period to period, it increased very substantially from 1980 until the late 1980s. Unfortunately, the troubles in Tibet from 1987 to 1989 resulted in a reduction in the extent of autonomy allowed, precisely the opposite effect to the one desired. At the same time, it is important to note that these troubles have not resulted in a drastic change of policy in the direction of assimilation, such as many feared at the time, and

the trend towards greater autonomy appears to have resumed in most parts of China in the 1990s.

It follows that the PRC has been fairly successful in achieving Chinese national cohesion, or integration, and considerably more so than earlier regimes. The rights and wrongs of the Tibetan claim to independence are not the issue here. The reality is that the Chinese government has aimed to preserve national unity and has succeeded, although at considerable cost in terms of bitterness among the Tibetans and to a much slighter extent several other nationalities. While China undoubtedly had its nationalities problems as of 1993, there were but few signs that they were serious enough to cause a breakup of the country before the end of the twentieth century.

Foreign Relations and China's Minority Nationalities

SINCE so many of China's minority nationalities live near borders, they have inevitably exercised some effect on China's relations with its neighbours, in some cases significantly, in others in only a mild or unimportant way. Many of China's minorities have co-nationals on the other side of the PRC's borders with foreign countries. Even before the break up of the Soviet Union, two of the most significant minorities, the Mongols and Koreans, had their own independent countries bordering China, while the independence of Kazakhstan at the end of 1991 added the Kazaks to the list. Among the less populous of China's minorities are the Gin of Guangxi, who are the same as the Vietnamese, and the Kirgiz and Tajiks, whose transborder co-nationals respectively control Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, two of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. The issue of Tibetan independence has, from time to time, operated very negatively in China's relations with the United States and India. In other words, the minority nationalities of the PRC are a factor which must be taken into account not only in its domestic policy but in its foreign relations as well.

It is the aim of this chapter to explore the effect of China's minority nationalities on its foreign relations. The primary focus will be Xinjiang and especially Tibet, where the impact of minorities has been most spectacular. The south-western provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi will receive much less attention because the impact of the minorities on China's relationships with countries which share its southern borders has been substantially less.

Although cases of conflict and hostility inevitably take up most of the space, it would not be fair to look at minorities only as a source of enmity. The PRC and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) enjoyed consistently good relations from 1949 on, and although there has been tension at times, no split has occurred. China's intervention saved the DPRK from extinction during the 1950-3 Korean War, during which the Koreans in Yanbian apparently strongly supported their co-nationals involved in the war on the other side of the border.¹ The Koreans in both countries have

to some extent contributed to the generally harmonious relations between the PRC and DPRK, since some have relations on the other side of the border and visits are frequent. On the other hand, most Koreans in China try to avoid involving themselves in international relations. During visits to Yanbian in 1986 and 1990, the present author found that ordinary Koreans had very little time for, or interest in, the DPRK, its government, or its leaders. However, some small traders were visiting the DPRK to sell consumer goods less readily available there. The commodity distribution system being poor in the DPRK, these traders were able to fill a real need and make good amounts of money.

The PRC and the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) established diplomatic relations on 16 October 1949, about a fortnight after the birth of the PRC. There were important implications for both states. By its action, China was once and for all abandoning its claim to re-incorporate what it had once called Outer Mongolia. For the MPR, the speedy recognition of the PRC was tantamount to an acknowledgment that Inner Mongolia was a permanent part of Chinese territory.

China and Mongolia signed a Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance in May 1960 and a Boundary Treaty in December 1962. However, relations quickly deteriorated after that and did not begin to heal until the mid-1980s. Since that time, and as of 1993, relations have consistently improved. The MPR's transformation into the State of Mongolia in October 1991 made no difference to bilateral relations. In mid-1992, the ruling leftist Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party did extremely well in general elections, almost wiping out the opposition democratic party. The Party's victory was more decisive than expected and came despite criticism from the opposition that it was too pro-China and might even allow the country to slip under Chinese control once again. This suggests that the Mongolian people are generally no longer inclined to stress fear or hatred of their great southern neighbour.

For Mongolia, Mongols in China and Chinese in Mongolia have been issues during periods when relations have been strained. After the decisive deterioration in relations in 1963-4, Mongolia expelled many Chinese residents from its territory for a variety of reasons, especially allegedly for trying to subvert the state in the interests of an expansionist China. In June 1964, the Mongolian government accused China of discriminating against its own minorities and attempts to assimilate the Mongols.² During the period

when overall relations were bad, this theme also became a constant one in Mongolia's policy towards China. However, the principal determinant of PRC-MPR relations until late 1991 was virtually always the state of China's relations with the Soviet Union. During periods of Sino-Soviet conflict or tension, Mongolia has invariably sided with the Soviet Union against China. The 1963-4 deterioration in relations saw Mongolia accusing China of interference in its affairs and trying 'to separate it from the world Communist movement and from its tested vanguard, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union'.³ For the MPR, a secondary determinant during periods of hostile relations with China has been its perception of the threat from the PRC, a belief that 'the Maoists consider the annexation of Mongolia as an indispensable condition for the consolidation of Great Han hegemonism in Asia'.⁴ The Mongol population in China has exercised some impact on bilateral relations, but not a dominant one.

Xinjiang

The minorities of Xinjiang have at all times been involved in relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union, but especially from the 1950s to 1962. This was above all the case with the Kazaks in Jungaria, in the north of Xinjiang, and most of all in the three districts of Jungaria which bordered the Soviet Union: Yili, Tarbagatai, and Altai. As has already been noted, Russian and then Soviet influence had been very strong in the region since the second half of the nineteenth century. Stalin had enjoyed good relations with Chiang Kaishek and their two governments even signed a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in August 1945. However, when it became obvious that the CCP would win the civil war in China, Soviet policy changed, and it was probably with active Soviet support that Burhan Shahidi cabled Mao Zedong of his surrender to the CCP in September 1949.

Until the late 1950s, the Soviet impact remained strong in Xinjiang in general and in the three districts of north Jungaria in particular. From December 1949 to early March 1950, Mao Zedong, and for some of the time Zhou Enlai, held long negotiations with Soviet leaders, culminating in the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance signed in Moscow on 14 February 1950. These negotiations included a delegation from Xinjiang led

by the Moscow-trained Uygur, Azizi Seyfettin, usually known simply as Saifudin, who had been Minister of Education in the secessionist East Turkestan Republic and was to become the first Chairman of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region when it was set up in October 1955. The delegation reached agreement with the Soviet Union for two joint-stock companies, including one for the exploration and exploitation of petroleum. While he was in Moscow, it was announced that Saifudin, who was already a member of the Soviet Communist Party, had also been accepted into the CCP.⁵

Most of those troops which had supported the East Turkestan Republic had been friendly to the Soviet Union and after liberation either disbanded or were absorbed into the People's Liberation Army. There was some Kazak resistance to the CCP, but it was not particularly strong.⁶ The main exception was in the north-eastern part of Jungaria, especially Altai, where Soviet influence had not been quite as strong as in Yili. The most important of the anti-Chinese Kazak rebel leaders was probably Osman Batur, who had supported the East Turkestan Republic, but in 1946 went over to the Guomindang claiming that this course was his best opportunity for opposing communism.⁷ American reporters who visited him in his hide-out east of Ürümqi gave him some publicity, but he was executed by the CCP as an American agent in 1951.⁸

Despite the official rhetoric about the brotherhood between the Soviet and Chinese Communist Parties, it is highly likely that the CCP was very wary of Soviet influence from the beginning, especially in the three districts of northern Jungaria. The CCP strove to move Xinjiang away from the Soviet Union and to integrate it more firmly into China. The Production Construction Corps, made up of soldiers and designed to speed up economic development, enabled the CCP and the Chinese army to increase their control over the Uygurs, Kazaks, and others in Xinjiang at the expense of the Soviet Union. Since 1950, the CCP's policy had been to use the military for economic purposes, and the numbers of men involved increased throughout the 1950s. In particular, the Production Construction Corps contributed significantly to the policy of resettling Han people in Xinjiang from further east. In Yili and other parts of Jungaria, Kazaks, Uygurs, and other minorities tended to measure their surroundings by Soviet standards, not Chinese, while the cultural influences in the towns were from

the Soviet Union, not from the Chinese heartland.⁹ The establishment of the Yili Kazak autonomous prefecture on 21 November 1954 was a formal declaration in administrative terms that the region was part of the Chinese state structure. Soviet influence remained particularly strong over Kazak intellectuals, but from 1957 the CCP sought to change this through a rectification campaign focusing on denunciations of 'local nationalism'.¹⁰ The next year people's communes were set up in most of China, including 'pastoral communes' in Jungaria, and in the spring of 1960 urban people's communes followed. McMillen regards these urban communes to be of great significance for the integration of Yili into Xinjiang and China. He writes that, by the middle of 1960, 'with the formation of urban communes', the Yili Kazak autonomous prefecture had 'lost its political and economic distinctiveness in all but name, the Soviets found themselves increasingly excluded, and the whole area became reoriented' to Ürümqi and Beijing.¹¹

As the Chinese attempted to eliminate Soviet influence in Xinjiang, the overall Sino-Soviet relationship was deteriorating rapidly. By July 1960, relations had worsened to the point where the Soviet Union felt called on to notify China of its decision to withdraw all its experts within a month. In 1962, the split resulted in a serious crisis in northern Xinjiang, lasting from April to the late summer. In the spring, about 50,000 people, mainly Kazaks and Uygurs, fled across the border to the Soviet Union. In order to stem the flood, the Chinese closed the border on 26 May, but an enormous demonstration against this action took place in the centre of Gulja, the capital of Yili, three days later. A riot erupted, offices were sacked, and people beaten up. Finally troops dispersed the rioters by force, killing a few people and arresting many in the process. Similar riots occurred in Qoqek, further to the north, and elsewhere. Early in July, the Chinese had the Soviet consulates in Gulja and Ürümqi closed down.¹² The crisis quietened down to some extent later in the year.

The Chinese government charged that the Soviet Union had carried out 'large-scale subversive activities in the Yili region and enticed and coerced' these people to move to Kazakhstan.¹³ If the Soviet Union encouraged the troubles it would come as no surprise, given that it had invested a considerable amount in the economic and social development of Yili only to see its influence undercut. In September 1963, a Soviet-educated Kazak, who had taken part in the East Turkestan Republic but later joined the

People's Liberation Army in Xinjiang, actually claimed to have fled to Kazakhstan in 1962 and there become the head of an anti-Chinese guerrilla army sponsored by the Soviet Union and containing some 60,000 minority refugees from Xinjiang.¹⁴

However, there were no doubt other reasons for the migrations too. In 1963, the Soviet press published articles in which Kazak refugees had referred to two specific causes of resentment. For one, those who expressed sympathy with the Soviet Union were sent to re-education camps; for another, they disliked the regimentation of life occasioned by the communes.¹⁵ Obviously these views bear the heavy imprint of Soviet policy regarding China at the time, but they are perfectly plausible all the same.

The overall effect of this crisis was to convince the Chinese to increase their military hold on Yili. Patterson claims that, in the first half of 1964, some 200,000 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army arrived in Gulja and other parts of Jungaria, in addition to the troops already garrisoned there. These troops were allegedly attached to the Xinjiang Production Construction Corps. Gulja was transformed 'from an agricultural market town into a large military base'.¹⁶

Security was tightened still further during the Cultural Revolution. Relations between minority and Han reached a low point at the same time as Sino-Soviet relations moved towards their nadir. To demonstrate its ideological hatred of the Soviet Union against the background of an obsession with class struggle at home, the CCP pushed the slogan that 'the domestic class struggle and the international class struggle are interwoven'. In August 1969, there was a series of border clashes in the Yumin area of Xinjiang north of Gulja. The Chinese began a campaign to build tunnels under Chinese cities against the threat of a Soviet pre-emptive nuclear strike.¹⁷ The Chinese government took advantage of these border threats to clamp down on pro-Soviet or local nationalist feeling. At the same time, in the face of the very dangerous situation which they faced at that time, the authorities' policy towards the minorities was to treat them 'with caution in an effort to achieve unity and solidarity'.¹⁸ The motivation was clearly fear of stirring up too much anti-Han hatred among the Uygurs, Kazaks, or other minorities which might be turned against China itself.

Just as the end of the Cultural Revolution appeared to augur a reduction in tensions, a new and serious crisis broke out in the form of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of December

1979. The Chinese government saw in the invasion evidence that the Soviet Union was a threat to China's security and to the peace of Asia and even the world. It pointed to the continuing Soviet occupation as one of the three obstacles to 'normalization' of bilateral relations. There were implications for China's main Tajik area in Xinjiang, which shares a very short border with Afghanistan, but one with Tajiks on the Afghan side of the border as well. Nevertheless, the minority issue was never more than very peripheral to the fury which China expressed over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The threat to China lay not so much to the minority areas as to the country as a whole. Relations with the Soviet Union would have been seriously affected even if the border with Afghanistan had not been in a minority area. This obstacle to 'normalization' of Sino-Soviet relations was removed in February 1989, with the completion of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Even apart from the Afghanistan issue, the 1980s did not begin well for Xinjiang. In April 1980, there was a clash in Aksu, southern Xinjiang, involving mainly Han youths and soldiers. It was serious enough to kill or wound several hundred civilians and soldiers, and disturbances continued in the following period. However, the frustrations and resentments of the resettled Han youths were the primary issue, not minority problems. In November 1980, Han youths demonstrated in Aksu over dissatisfaction with conditions, including the lack of jobs, and a riot ensued. In response to this event, Wang Zhen, formerly the top CCP and People's Liberation Army leader in Xinjiang and since December 1978 a member of the CCP Central Committee's Politburo, was sent from Beijing to deal with the situation. Although ameliorative measures were later taken, it was made clear to the Han youths that their presence was required in part to guard the border regions against the continuing threat from the Soviet Union. Members of the minorities were certainly antagonistic towards the Han youths.¹⁹ However, it is ironic to find a problem concerning Sino-Soviet relations in Xinjiang focused more on Han youths than members of the minority nationalities there.

During the 1980s, policy towards the minority nationalities improved greatly in Xinjiang, as everywhere else in China. Late in 1981, Wang Enmao, who had been ousted during the Cultural Revolution, returned to power as CCP head in Xinjiang. Wang had contributed enormously to Xinjiang's growth 'into a modern

Chinese state' before the Cultural Revolution, and his return was a very good omen for economic growth and relations among the nationalities.²⁰ Despite Afghanistan and the other obstacles to 'normalization' of Sino-Soviet relations, a tentative detente began in 1982 which accelerated markedly with the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in Moscow in March 1985. The net result was a substantial improvement in Xinjiang during most of the 1980s, in particular regarding the role of nationalities in China's foreign relations.

However, towards the end of the 1980s tensions flared again in some nationality areas in Xinjiang and elsewhere. The year 1989 saw big Islamic demonstrations in many parts of China, including Xinjiang, not to mention the enormous student movement which ended in the Beijing massacre of 3-4 June.²¹ In April 1990 disturbances again flared up in Xinjiang.

According to a local Xinjiang television account, an 'armed counter-revolutionary rebellion' occurred on 5 and 6 April in Baren township in Akto county, Kizilsu Kirgiz autonomous prefecture, which is in the far west of Xinjiang not very far from the border with Tajikistan, at that time a republic of the Soviet Union. The television report claimed the organization responsible for the rebellion was the Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan, which aimed to establish a separatist Islamic republic.²² Although the rebellion was put down very quickly, it succeeded in causing a great deal of damage, including to ethnic relations in the area; there were over twenty deaths, mainly of members of Islamic minorities, among them that of the rebellion's leader. Later in 1990, the troubles led to a major purge of officials in Baren township and a tightening of control over Islam in Akto county in which 50 mosques closed down and the construction of 153 others was halted.²³

It appears that the political and social stability for which the Chinese government had yearned, especially since the crack-down of mid-1989, had come unstuck, at least in this part of Xinjiang. Official reports suggested that the main threat to stability in Xinjiang came from 'splittist forces within and outside the country'.²⁴ Those 'within' obviously refer to extremist Muslims belonging to the minorities of the region, including Kirgiz, Uyghurs, and possibly Tajiks. Those 'outside the country' presumably refer to those trying to incite secession in Xinjiang. They were almost certainly unofficial. China was on good and improving terms with

the Soviet Union at the time. Gorbachev had gone to Beijing and Shanghai in May 1989 and effected the formal 'normalization' of Sino-Soviet relations.

However, despite Gorbachev's strong opposition to them, nationalist and secessionist movements had already broken out all over the Soviet Union which in 1991 were to lead to the total disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formal independence of all its republics. In particular, national feelings had for some time been intensifying in the Islamic republics of Central Asia. In February 1990, ethnic unrest in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, flared into serious violence, leaving some thirty people dead. A rampage by young Tajiks had broken out against Armenians. 'Russians were told that a pogrom against infidels was imminent'.²⁵ The possibility is strong that a spill-over effect from Tajikistan to nearby Akto in Xinjiang was one of the reasons why the rebellion occurred in Baren township in April 1990.

In sharp contrast to earlier crises in Yili, above all that of 1962, the Chinese on this occasion raised no suggestion publicly that the troubles in Akto had been deliberately fanned by any official of the Soviet Union. By this time, both sides were doing their best to improve bilateral relations. Apart from the 'normalization' of relations in 1989, Premier Li Peng had, when the rebellion in Akto took place in April 1990, already planned a visit to Moscow for later the same month, the first by a top Chinese leader for twenty-six years. The visit took place from 23 to 26 April as planned, the Chinese delegation including the Xinjiang Governor. There was speculation, although it was not officially reported, that Li Peng discussed the cross-border problems with the Soviet leadership. In any case, his visit appears to have 'achieved the modest goal of maintaining momentum in Sino-Soviet relations'.²⁶

This material suggests that the overall Sino-Soviet relationship has affected the state of the minorities in Xinjiang rather more than the other way around. However, minority issues have exacerbated relations with the Soviet Union at times when they were already tense. The most obvious example of this was the situation in Yili in 1962. Most importantly, the fact that Xinjiang is home to so many minority peoples functioned for several generations as a threat to China's relations with the Soviet Union and as a permanent source of anxiety to China about its borders. The PRC government's biggest nightmare has always been the possibility that peoples along the frontiers might transfer loyalty away

from China and to the powerful state on the other side of the border.

Tibet to the 1959 Rebellion

In the case of Xinjiang's minority nationalities, the country with which China's international relations were most heavily affected was of course the Soviet Union, overwhelmingly the most important country to share borders with Xinjiang. As far as Tibet and the Tibetans are concerned, however, China's foreign relations interests extend beyond India, which shares a long border with China, to include other countries, especially the US. On the other hand, Nepal, which also has a very long border with the Tibetan autonomous region, has largely managed to keep out of international problems surrounding Tibet. The essential explanations for the pattern of the Tibetan impact on China's foreign relations lie in the overall world strategic balance of power and the activities of the Dalai Lama.

India and the PRC established full diplomatic relations on 1 April 1950, and the two countries enjoyed very good relations with each other until the late 1950s. Even before diplomatic relations were established, however, the potential existed for discord over the related issues of Tibet and the Sino-Indian boundaries. Just before and after the PRC was established on 1 October 1949, several articles appeared in the Chinese press attacking Nehru and his government for being a stooge of British and American imperialism because, among other reasons, India did not accept that Tibet had ever recognized Chinese suzerainty over it.²⁷

Actually, from China's point of view the enemy in India was not Nehru, who was well-disposed towards China and even prepared to tolerate its claim to Tibet, but his deputy and rival Vallabhbhai Patel. As early as December 1949, Patel privately expressed misgivings about a speedy recognition of the PRC.²⁸ In a letter to Nehru of 7 November 1950, after Chinese troops had actually entered Tibet, Patel declared China's take-over as 'little short of perfidy' and India's inability to help the Tibetans and the Dalai Lama as a 'tragedy'. He pointed to the problem which the take-over of Tibet raised for India regarding its borders with China and dubbed 'the danger from the north and north-east' as 'both communist and imperialist'.²⁹ Nehru's reply, dated 18 November,

was considerably more sympathetic to China than Patel's letter. He emphasized the desirability of long-term friendship with China and dismissed the notion of Chinese expansionism as 'rather naïve'. He hoped that Tibetan autonomy could be maintained, but acknowledged that 'this autonomy can obviously not be anything like the autonomy verging on independence' which had characterized the decades since the fall of the Qing dynasty. He also categorically rejected any suggestion that India should sponsor the Tibetan appeal to the United Nations.³⁰ Clearly, the related issues of Tibet and the boundary with China were on the agenda and potentially divisive right from the start.

Although accepting China's claim to Tibet, the Indian government advocated only negotiations and opposed the use of force. In a note to China delivered on 21 October by the Indian ambassador, the Indian government expressed concern that the military expedition would be 'interpreted as a disturbance of the peace' and thus 'be prejudicial' to China's chances of immediate acceptance into the United Nations. In a further note of 28 October, it expressed 'deep regret that in spite of the friendly disinterested advice' China had persisted in the use of force to secure Tibet. China's responses argued in essence that India should not involve itself in the matter since Tibet was China's internal affair and mutual respect for territory was one of the principles of their bilateral friendship.³¹

Meanwhile, on 11 November 1950, the Tibetan local government cabled the United Nations Secretary-General appealing for intercession to 'restrain Chinese aggression'.³² Less than three weeks before this, Chinese troops had intervened in Korea against US-led United Nations forces. However, the Soviet delegate agreed with the PRC claim that Tibet was an integral part of China and was supported in this stand by the Chinese delegate. At the time, the China seat in the UN was occupied by the representative of Chiang Kaishek's government. However, if there was one issue on which Mao and Chiang could agree, it was the status of Tibet as part of China. The British, who after all had never recognized Tibet as an independent state, put forward the view that its status was unclear. The Indians expressed confidence that the issue of Tibet could be solved peacefully in a way which safeguarded Tibet's autonomy. The matter was shelved.

The Indian government clearly recognized the relationship between two crucial issues in its relations with China: Tibet and

the demarcation of the borders. Yet, for several years in the 1950s, China and India shared substantial interests as newly emerging countries which had just shaken off Western shackles through nationalist movements. Both were keen exponents of the 'five principles of peaceful coexistence' and proud participants in the Afro-Asian Conference held in **Bandung**, Indonesia, in April 1955. In April 1954 in Beijing, China and India signed the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India, under which free access across the frontier was allowed to traders and pilgrims of either Tibet or India.³³ The Agreement signalled the end of the withdrawal of rights which India had enjoyed in Tibet as successors to the British. Even during the period of closest friendship between China and India, discussions continued concerning their mutual borders. The problem was that the Indian government, as successor to the British colonialists, still recognized the boundary demarcated in 1914 and known as the McMahon line, while China had never accepted it. When Zhou Enlai visited India late in 1956, bringing relations more or less to their highest point, he raised the matter of the McMahon line with Nehru. A misunderstanding arose regarding the conversation, which is not really relevant to the topic of the present book and therefore need not detain us. Discussion over the border tended to become more acrimonious as the 1950s wore on.³⁴

However, what really gave the boundary dispute 'a new dimension and therefore qualitatively a new character',³⁵ what injected real poison into a dispute in which the leaders on both sides had tried to maintain friendly relations, was the outbreak of the Tibetan rebellion in March 1959 and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India. In its first full statement of its position regarding these events, the Chinese government blamed the old religious and secular aristocracy, but also 'the imperialists, the Chiang Kai-shek bands and foreign reactionaries'. Moreover, it declared that 'the commanding centre (sic) of the rebellion was in Kalimpong', which is the terminus of the trade route from Tibet to India through the Chumbi Valley, and that many of the rebels' armaments were brought in from outside China." The 'imperialists' refer mainly to the US, while the 'foreign reactionaries' appear to be above all the Indians.

The suggestions of foreign interference were actually not new. In July 1958, the Chinese government had sent a note to India alleging that the US and the Guomintang were using the Kalimpong area for subversive activities against China's control of Tibet. The

Indians immediately rejected the suggestion.³⁷ However, Maxwell claims that, as early as 1953, Nehru had described Kalimpong as a 'nest of spies' from every country.³⁸ George Patterson, an Englishman who was actually living in Kalimpong and had good Tibetan contacts, considers the 'nest of spies' designation an exaggeration. Still, his own quite detailed account leaves no doubt that 'there was a considerable amount of intrigue going on' there from 1950 on,³⁹ much of it directed against the maintenance of Chinese rule in Tibet. On 4 August 1958, various anti-Chinese Tibetans, including 'every Tibetan official of note in India, their cabinet ministers, and guerrilla leaders, met in Kalimpong 'to draw up a final appeal' to India and the United Nations for action in Tibet.⁴⁰ This information may not prove that Kalimpong was the command centre of the rebellion, but it leaves no doubt that active encouragement and support for the rebellion were coming from outside Tibet itself.

The US was also undoubtedly involved, and at a very official and high level. In 1975, reporter Chris Mullin claimed strong evidence, including the confirmation of the Dalai Lama himself, for his allegation of direct interference by the American Central Intelligence Agency. Among other points, he declared that, between late 1957 and the end of 1961, the CIA was parachuting guns and trained guerrillas into Tibet, and that early in 1958 the Americans attempted to persuade the Tibetan government to appeal openly for American intervention.⁴¹ As discussed previously, there were domestic reasons within Tibet itself for the rebellion, but, in addition, the Chinese had good reason for their belief that it was also being fanned from outside.

Tibet from the 1959 Rebellion to the Cultural Revolution

The Dalai Lama's escape to India in March 1959 had an immediate and extremely negative impact on Sino-Indian relations. The Indian government gave him political asylum. There was a great deal of support within India for the Dalai Lama's cause, and demonstrations broke out against the Chinese and their handling of the situation in Tibet.⁴² The old suspicions of China's policy towards Tibet, which as noted earlier had existed within the Indian government right from the beginning, surfaced again in sharp form. On their side, the Chinese stepped up their published attacks

on India, placing much of the blame for the rebellion on interference from India. No sooner had he arrived in India than the Dalai Lama began making repeated statements denouncing China. The Indian government did not wish to prevent him, because of the freedom of expression prevailing in India. However, Nehru did declare that, although the Dalai Lama would be accorded respectful treatment there, he would be expected to desist from political activities in India.

On 27 April 1959, in an attempt to conciliate the very tense and deteriorating situation, Nehru made a statement on the situation in Tibet, emphasizing his desire to maintain India's security and friendly relations with China, as well as his deep sympathy for the Tibetan people. His tone towards China was definitely mild, but he clearly disagreed with the Chinese interpretation of the rebellion and denied as 'wholly unjustified' the charge that Kalimpong had been a centre of the rebellion.⁴³ China reacted very fiercely through an extremely long editorial in the *People's Daily*. It denounced Nehru as a member of a 'counter-revolutionary "holy alliance" of the Metternich type' which included such members as the US State Department and the British colonialists.⁴⁴ The late 1950s were a very insecure time for China, not only in its south-west, but also in the south-east. The previous year, China had yielded to American demands over Quemoy and Matsu and been compelled to leave in Guomindang hands these two islands so extremely close to the Fujian coast. As suggested by one scholar, what was evidently worrying China most at this time was 'that it might be faced with a more or less coordinated set of pressures on the Tibetan frontier and in the Taiwan Strait'.⁴⁵ Relations with the Soviet Union were also deteriorating rapidly.

The Tibetan issue became very much bound up in international politics when, in mid-1959, in response to the Dalai Lama's call for an impartial inquiry, the International Commission of Jurists issued a preliminary report harshly critical of China. Emboldened by this expression of international support, the Dalai Lama decided to appeal to the United Nations. He went to New Delhi, where he was greeted by many Indian supporters and was granted a personal interview with Nehru to explain his decision. Nehru gave him assent and, on 9 September 1959, the Dalai Lama cabled the United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, claiming Tibet's status as a fully sovereign and independent state and soliciting 'immediate intervention' and consideration of the Tibetan issue.⁴⁶

The matter was subsequently debated in the General Assembly. A resolution, sponsored by Ireland and Malaya, was adopted on 21 October by a vote of 45 to 9, with 26 abstentions, calling for 'respect for the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people and for their distinctive cultural and religious life'. The resolution made no reference to Tibetan sovereignty or independence, nor did it directly mention China, although the quoted segment above was clearly an implied condemnation of China. The Soviet Union argued against the resolution, claiming it was nothing but an attempt to use the United Nations to intensify the Cold War. The Western powers supported it, but Nehru's assent to the Dalai Lama's action was not the same as support. India was among those countries which abstained.⁴⁸ The PRC itself was not represented at the discussion. It reacted furiously to the resolution's passage, arguing that the US and its followers had manipulated the United Nations to serve 'as a tool for interfering in China's internal affairs and creating international tension'.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the serious decline in Sino-Indian relations, of which the Tibetan rebellion and the flight of the Dalai Lama were the immediate causes, influenced the situation along the two countries' mutual borders. In August 1959, a military clash took place and discussions between the two governments heated up. Nehru's attitude towards China changed markedly. In April 1960, Zhou Enlai visited India at Nehru's invitation in a bid by both to prevent further erosion of their relations. Zhou went to New Delhi directly from Burma accompanied by the Burmese leader General Ne Win, with whom he had signed a boundary agreement in Beijing as recently as 28 January 1960. However, Zhou received a rather cool reception in India, both from the public and the leaders. No agreement was reached on the borders, and relations worsened even further, climaxing in a brief but serious border war between the two countries in October and November 1962.⁵⁰ Although the Soviet Union had supported China's stand on Tibet in 1959 relations between the two countries had deteriorated in the meantime to the extent that the Soviets actually sided with India over the border war.

The August 1959 border clash brought primary attention back to what had all along been potentially the most dangerous factor in the Sino-Indian relationship, namely their mutual borders. However, Tibet persisted as a divisive issue. When the Dalai Lama promulgated a Constitution on 10 March 1963 to mark the fourth

anniversary of the rebellion in Lhasa, China again denounced India for using the Dalai Lama 'as an instrument against China' and for allowing what were quite obviously political activities, in contravention of Nehru's own declaration of March 1959.⁵¹ In an article in the *People's Daily*, an official commentator described India's publication of the Constitution as an 'act of treachery' and even suggested that it 'exposed the expansionist designs of India against the China's territory of Tibet'.⁵²

The state of Sino-Indian relations continued to worsen as the 1960s progressed. As China's relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated, India's improved markedly. Nehru's death in May 1964 no doubt removed an obstacle to the extension of Chinese influence in the Third World, but his successors continued his policy towards China.⁵³ India's comments on the situation in Tibet became more hostile to China. For instance, on 14 December 1965, a few months after the establishment of the Tibet autonomous region, the Indian representative in the United Nations gave a long catalogue of Chinese crimes in Tibet, which mirrored the claims of the Dalai Lama and climaxed in the declaration that 'the Chinese Government is determined to obliterate the Tibetan people'.⁵⁴

A very low point in China's relations with India, and indeed virtually all the rest of the world, came during the Cultural Revolution. As noted earlier, this was also the worst period for minorities in China, in particular the Tibetans. The Indian government lifted its restrictions on the Dalai Lama's political activities, resulting in a notable increase in anti-PRC endeavours by the Dalai Lama and his supporters and in vituperative Chinese reactions. In September 1967, the Dalai Lama left India for the first time since 1959.⁵⁵ His destination was Japan, which consequently came under Beijing's fire for its 'serious provocation'. In savage language typical of the Cultural Revolution period, China denounced not only the 'rebel bandit leader Dalai Lama' but also 'US imperialism and the Japanese and Indian reactionaries'.⁵⁶

Nepal, the other country with a very long border with Tibet, is a small and weak state sandwiched between India and China. It established diplomatic relations with China in August 1955. Despite occasional differences with China, bilateral relations have generally been very good. Perhaps most striking, the discord sparked by the Tibetan issue has been notable for its absence.

Nepal was never in any doubt about recognizing Tibet as part of China. When the matter was raised in the United Nations

following the 1959 rebellion, the Nepalese representative S. P. Upadhyaya spoke very defensively about the Chinese role and even challenged the propriety of discussing the matter without the PRC government's participation.⁵⁷

In 1960 Nepal and China signed a border agreement. There were temporary and not very serious problems at the time over whether Qomolangma (Mt. Everest) should be regarded part of China or Nepal. China quickly agreed that the peak itself formed the border. In mid-1960, there was a minor clash at the border which was immediately solved by an apology by Zhou Enlai. In May 1966, the two countries signed an Agreement on Trade, Intercourse and Related Questions, one of the provisions of which was that religious pilgrims could travel to and fro across the border without passports or visas.⁵⁸

The differences between Nepal and India in their relations with China in general and over Tibet in particular could hardly be more marked. The primary reason is that, although Nepal, like India, shares a long border with Tibet, it is quite unlike India in posing no challenge of any kind to China. Zhou Enlai could well afford to apologize to a country which could not possibly constitute a rival to China. The Agreement on Trade came at a time when China was embarking on the Cultural Revolution and its relations with most countries were getting worse. It was also about to enter upon savage religious persecutions in Tibet, making the provisions for religious pilgrims all the more remarkable.

There were those who predicted in the 1960s that friendship between China and Nepal could not last. For instance, George Patterson was of the view that the almost 20,000 Tibetans along Nepal's northern border with Tibet, almost half of whom had at one time fought against the Chinese government as rebels, could quite easily increase raids on Chinese in Tibet if they were given arms. He believed this was one of several factors which could give the Chinese the excuse they wanted 'to take direct action to absorb' Nepal.⁵⁹ However, as of 1993, this has not happened and is not threatening.

Tibet from the 1970s

The bitterness which had characterized China's relations with India during most of the 1960s to some extent lost its intensity in the

1970s. In July 1976, the first Indian Ambassador to China in fifteen years arrived in Beijing, and India on several occasions declared its acceptance that Tibet was part of China.⁶⁰ Even when the situation in Tibet itself improved during the 1980s, there was no fundamental improvement in Sino-Indian relations. It was not until the visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing in December 1988, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 34 years, that relations reverted to 'normal', although even then there was none of the enthusiasm on either side which had prevailed during the early and mid-1950s. In the joint communique issued at the end of the visit, China 'expressed concern over anti-China activities by some Tibetan elements in India', while India reiterated its long-standing position that Tibet is an autonomous region of China and declared that 'anti-China political activities by Tibetan elements are not permitted on Indian soil'. Reaction to the visit in India itself was rather critical, with some people believing that Gandhi had compromised too much. In particular, there was surprise at the inclusion of the paragraph about Tibet, and some Tibetans in India protested publicly against the visit.⁶¹

In December 1991, the Chinese Premier Li Peng visited India. He was greeted with friendship by the Indian government, but hostile demonstrations by Tibetans. In the joint communique issued at the end of Li's visit, '[t]he Indian side reiterated its long-standing and consistent position that Tibet is an autonomous region of China and that it does not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India'.⁶²

The references to anti-China activities by Tibetans in India are striking. Of course, the Chinese had been concerned over the Dalai Lama ever since 1959. However, in the 1970s, a new factor was inserted into the formula of resistance to China. In 1970, the Tibetan Youth Congress was founded in Dharamsala, the capital of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile. Within a few months it had grown into forty branches with some 10,000 members.⁶³ In July 1972, a second popular organization, this one called Struggle for the Restoration of Tibet's Rightful Independence, was set up in Dharamsala. Both groups were firmly committed to total independence for Tibet. In 1977, the Tibetan Youth Congress decided to turn to terrorism on the grounds that only this method would be effective against the Chinese. A 'freedom-fighting wing' was developed, and by early the next year 'instruction in guerrilla warfare, using wooden guns manufactured in settlement workshops,

got underway'.⁶⁴ Existing links with underground groups in Tibet itself were strengthened.

The Dalai Lama himself remained very reluctant to support the kind of terrorist violence advocated by the Tibetan Youth Congress. However, there is no doubt that it has retained a great deal of attraction among many young Tibetans in India. While supporters of Tibetan independence may be prepared to wink at, or even advocate support of, such activities, it comes as no surprise that the Chinese authorities regard it with the deepest suspicion and any support for it from public bodies or figures as the grossest interference in China's domestic affairs.

In 1979 and 1980, a series of three delegations from the exile community in India visited Tibet. They were rapturously welcomed in Tibet itself, but the second visit was cut short on the grounds that it had incited secession from China. Plans for a fourth delegation were cancelled. In April 1982, a group of three senior officials in the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile went to Beijing and held several weeks of negotiations over Tibet's status with relevant senior Chinese authorities, including the Mongol Ulanhu.⁶⁵ The talks eventually collapsed, foreclosing for many years the possibility of the Dalai Lama's return to China. Two major points of contention in the discussions between Beijing's representatives and the Dharamsala group were the degree of autonomy of Tibet within China and which territories should actually be included in Tibet. On the first point, comparisons arose with a proposal issued on 30 September 1981 by Ye Jianying, under which Taiwan would enjoy 'a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region' including the retention of its own armed forces and without any interference in local affairs from the central government. The PRC argued that the Taiwan formula, known as 'one country, two systems', was inapplicable to Tibet because, unlike Taiwan, it had already 'completed democratic reforms and socialist transformation'.⁶⁷ The implication was that the degree of autonomy appropriate to Taiwan would be too great for Tibet. The Dalai Lama's government-in-exile, on the other hand, was demanding 'a far greater degree of freedom' than that offered to Taiwan.⁶⁸

The size of Tibet was understood by the PRC representatives to mean the territory currently making up the Tibet autonomous region,⁶⁹ while the Dharamsala group meant all those territories historically inhabited by Tibetans, an area about three times the size of the Tibet autonomous region and including parts of Sichuan,

Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan. According to Dawa Norbu, there was no consensus among the Chinese leaders on the size of Tibet and Hu Yaobang had in 1981 described the Dharamsala group's claim as 'a new idea which needs to be considered'.⁷² None the less, the clear implication is that, if Tibet were ever to achieve independence, its government would quite likely demand to incorporate substantial territories currently in other Chinese provinces outside the Tibet autonomous region. For the PRC, or indeed any Chinese government, this must inevitably loom large as a powerful reason never to grant independence.

Meanwhile, in 1979, the Dalai Lama made major trips outside India to areas as widely scattered as the Soviet Union, the MPR, the US and Europe. They were part of a strategy to increase his influence, especially in the West, and to discredit China's role in Tibet as thoroughly as he could. The 1979 trips were followed by several other similar ones in the following years. China's relations with the Western world, Japan, and many other countries improved radically in the 1970s and, until June 1989, even more in the 1980s. Although Dharamsala in India remained the Dalai Lama's headquarters, thus forming a more or less permanent thorn in the flesh of Sino-Indian relations, the impact of Tibet on China's foreign affairs in the 1980s was somewhat stronger on bilateral relations with the US and other Western countries than on those with India.

This became evident when pro-independence demonstrations erupted in Lhasa itself in September and October 1987. The Chinese authorities instantly labeled them 'an echo to the Dalai Lama's separatist activities during his visits to the United States and Europe',⁷³ where he had just been touring. Specifically, on 21 September 1987, he had met with members of two US Congressional bodies, including the Human Rights Caucus. He had called for Tibet to be designated a 'zone of peace' and for Chinese troops to withdraw and denounced China's policies and actions in Tibet. Three days afterwards, the Tibetan local government executed two Tibetans as criminals, but the Dalai Lama's spokesman claimed they were political prisoners. The Human Rights Caucus immediately endorsed this view, but the Chinese government denounced it as slanderous and unwarranted interference. On 6 October just after the demonstrations, the US Senate adopted a resolution on Tibet condemning human rights violations by the Chinese. The PRC Foreign Ministry responded the following day by demanding 'that the US Congress immediately stop all its interference in

China's internal affairs' and threatening a decline in relations if it did not.⁷² In mid-December, both Houses of Congress voted to condemn the PRC for human rights abuses in Tibet, in particular for allegedly having caused the deaths of over 1 million people between 1959 and 1979 and sending large numbers of Han into Tibet to submerge the Tibetan population in its own home territory (see also Chapter 9). On 26 December, the National People's Congress Nationalities and Foreign Affairs Committees issued a joint statement flatly denying both charges and again demanding that the US cease its crude interference in China's internal affairs.⁷³ Not surprisingly, the US ignored the threats and criticisms. As of 1993, the tension caused by Tibet as an issue in China's relations with the US has not weakened, but if anything intensified.

In addition to blaming the Dalai Lama's activities and American interference for the riots, the ire of the Chinese authorities also fell on foreign tourists and journalists. Since 1985, foreigners had been allowed access to Tibet incomparably more freely than before. Lhasa and other parts of Tibet became a kind of Mecca for young backpackers, especially from the West, Japan, and Hong Kong. For the first time foreign journalists found it possible to visit Tibet. The great majority returned with stories critical of Chinese rule, with large numbers favouring independence for Tibet. When the 1987 disturbances occurred, the Chinese authorities put some of the blame on the foreign visitors and the New China News Agency alleged that at least fifty of them had been directly involved in the demonstrations of 1 October 1987. Some non-PRC journalists were expelled from Tibet, and the rules were tightened on all foreign visits to Tibet.⁷⁴

The year after the riots of 1987, the Dalai Lama took a *further initiative relating to the independence issue. On 15 June 1988, he gave a speech in Strasbourg before the European Parliament in which he proposed that Tibet-by which he meant all Tibetan areas, not just the Tibet autonomous region-should become a self-governing, democratic political entity 'in association' with China. He specifically allowed for the possibility that China would maintain troops in Tibet and remain responsible for foreign policy. On the other hand, in domestic affairs Tibet would be totally independent, with its own social system.⁷⁵ Significantly, the Dalai Lama no longer appeared to be demanding total independence. On the other hand, the formula was similar to that put forward

commentary two days later described it as 'the ultimate mockery to the Nobel Peace Prize' and 'harmful to the cause of world peace'.⁸² Despite this strong language, China did not move towards breaking diplomatic links with Norway. There may have been implications in the King's attendance at the ceremony, but Norway had no intention of formally recognizing Tibetan independence.

The dialogue which the Dalai Lama and his representatives established with the Chinese government at the end of the 1970s appears to be continuing. Dawa Norbu wrote in May 1991 that it had 'definitely reached' the stage of negotiation about negotiation.⁸³ At that time he did not expect it to get much further in the foreseeable future. Since that time, independence movements have gained strength through developments in many parts of the world, especially through the disintegration of the Soviet Union. China remains adamantly opposed to such a trend, especially as regards its own unity. Yet, Tibet is certain to remain an issue in the coming years and to loom large in the debates within future Chinese governments.

Yunnan and Guangxi

Moving along the borders to the east are further areas inhabited by minority nationalities, namely Yunnan and Guangxi, where the problems caused have not been nearly as great as in Tibet. The successful integration of the minorities in Yunnan and Guangxi was a major factor in the consolidation of China's borders with Vietnam and Burma, among other countries of South-East Asia. One study published in 1973 concluded that the transformation of the border under the PRC had 'fundamentally altered' China's relations with its South-East Asian neighbours and made the southern frontier regions 'not so vulnerable to outside penetration' as they had once been.⁸⁴

Burma established full diplomatic relations with the PRC on 8 June 1950, and the two countries initially enjoyed very good relations. The fact that several nationalities inhabit both sides of the border, a source of tension and even strife in many circumstances, was raised with enthusiasm by both sides as a reason why they should be friendly. Late in 1956, a large-scale 'China-Burma border people's friendship meeting' was held in Luxi, capital of the Dehong Dai and Jingpo autonomous prefecture, which had been

set up in July 1953. Luxi is in the far west of Yunnan, very near the border with Burma. Some 15,000 people attended, a notable feature being that they included people of the same nationality from either side of the border. Thus, there were Jingpo from China and Kachin from Burma, Dai from China and Shan from Burma.⁸⁵

Further to the east, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the PRC established diplomatic relations early in 1950. The DRV, led by Ho Chi Minh, had been formally established on 2 September 1945, but by 1950 it was fighting a war against the French, who had attempted to re-establish their colonial rule. Not until July 1954 did the Geneva Accords signal the expulsion of the French and the victory of Ho Chi Minh and his Vietnam Workers' Party in the northern part of Vietnam.

The part of China bordering Vietnam is Guangxi, which is inhabited by the Zhuang, among other nationalities. The Gin, whose population in Guangxi according to the 1990 census was 16,425, are a small community of Vietnamese. Guangxi is also home to several nationalities, including the Miao and Yao, whose populations inhabit Guangxi but extend into Vietnam, Laos, and northern Thailand.

With the victory of Ho Chi Minh in north Vietnam, the Chinese and DRV governments, both ruled by Marxist-Leninist parties, followed very similar policies towards their minority nationalities. There were frequent mutual visits between Guangxi and the DRV by delegations of minorities. When the DRV established its Viet Bac autonomous region in August 1956, containing six provinces and fourteen nationalities, a delegation of Zhuang, Yao, Miao, and others attended from Guangxi. Correspondingly, when the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region was set up in March 1958, Viet Bac sent a delegation of various nationalities to take part in the celebrations.⁸⁷

In October 1960, China and Burma signed a border treaty which affected territories inhabited by minorities. The negotiations leading up to the treaty had been handled on the Chinese side by Premier Zhou Enlai and, although intense, were generally friendly. There was a good deal of compromise on both sides, but in the end China ceded more territory than it gained.⁸⁸ Having signed the treaty in Burma in 1960, Zhou Enlai returned there for its ratification in January 1961.

In the 1960s, relations between China and Burma worsened seriously. In 1967, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, major